Wheeling's Festival of Lights • Virtual Reality • Sustainable Woodworking

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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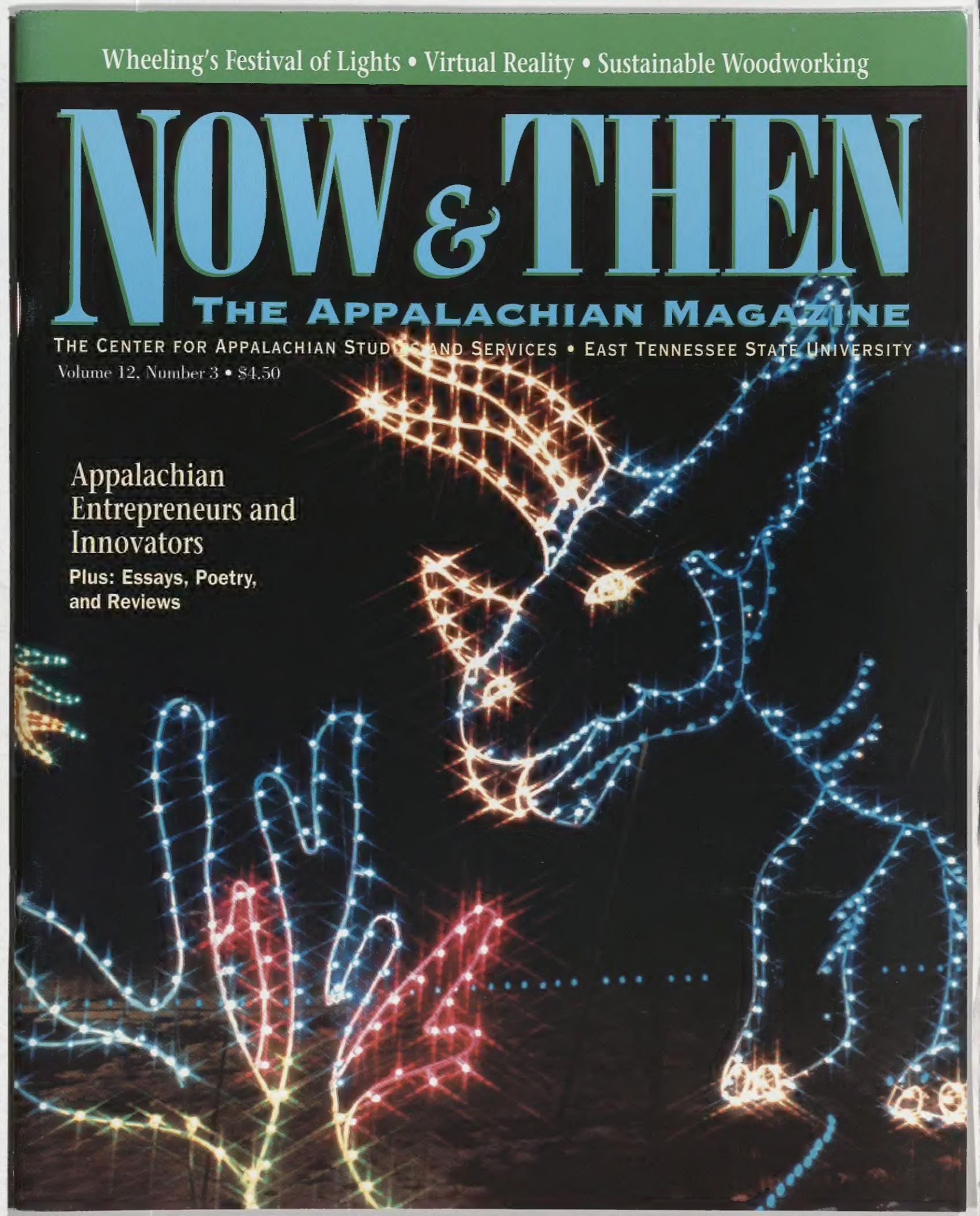

Appalachian Entrepreneurs and Innovators

Plus: Essays, Poetry, and Reviews

Near Johnson City: A Teacher
(for J.D.M.)

The Chinese poet drives from Composition
to Winn-Dixie for diet cola, ground
round, Cheerios, fresh mint, also sweet
potatoes for the dog, Sun Ch'ien, who

chews the skins. The poet smiles, his white
beard still as a bush, eyes glistening, his
forehead turns the color of peaches. He
speaks softly to himself. The grocery is
a place he contemplates

the girl tallying eggs
at ninety-five, popups, pears, special
today on frozen spinach. "Cheap,"
he concludes, setting each thing out.
So quick she hasn't looked
once from the prices, the girl

punches the total, notices him
and is astonished, gapes,
can't move. He leans back,
taken in a bit by her gold front tooth,
until it shows him shimmering,
his gangly arms ballooning out. He
counts to her palm – she doesn't feel it, she is

undone. He'd forgotten how he appears
when, as now, his weariness slips like a mantle
from his shoulders, letting off
a corona of light –
it flickers across his neck and arms,
brief, incessant. A yellow flash
pops from his forehead,

not apparent to the
shoppers lined behind him. She looks
at the total, opens
the drawer with a bump of her hip,
fingers change and the tape.

"Thanks," he says – but her mouth
hangs, there's no keeping
the light to him now. He blinks,
he turns to leave, she feels,
she knows she's the only one to see
gold chutes flip from
his shoulders, elbows and hips, see them

scrape flecks of paint
from the ceiling, float and turn,
nudge a tilting pack of light
bulbs from the top display
to a baby's lap, knock
this can of tomatoes
corn and okra from the conveyor

into her hand. Why must she discern the
wonderful and ridiculous
Chinese poet, this community college teacher
held to the ground by a knapsack of groceries?
He walks from the wheezing door
through the pitted parking lot,
through those waves of feral sunlight
he cannot help rescuing
to arrange

in a walking prayer
not beheld by anyone
until, as now, in
the usual place, he's had to defer
to that gold tooth
and quickly depart, seen and unseen. Her jaw
claps, she

Thanks another Customer
for Shopping at Winn-Dixie.

The Chinese poet is getting
older. These days he would not
apprehend what anyone might
believe he blesses or is
blessed by.

Tonight she will write of him in her diary,
begin to describe a light,
then cross that out.

— David Y. Todd

David Y. Todd earned his M.F.A. at the University of Florida, where he wrote under the guidance of Padgett Powell, Donald Justice, and other teachers. His fiction won a Transatlantic Review *Award from the Henfield Foundation. His nonfiction has appeared in* The Boston Globe, Sewanee Review, Gettysburg Review, Boulevard, *and elsewhere. He writes and teaches at the College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C.*

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"Call us another batch of American dreamers."
— Margaret Young

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Making Do and Taking Risks

Appalachia on the cutting edge: Now *there's* a phrase that doesn't crop up with much regularity.

When our book review editor, Sandy Ballard, suggested "Entrepreneurs and Innovators" as a theme, we immediately recognized it for the good idea it was. After all, "make-do-or-do-without" is the region's unofficial motto. Especially in the mountain communities of Appalachia, people with relatively paltry resources at hand have been coming up with ingenious ways of meeting their needs for generations.

But the theme has also given us a chance to play against some of the stereotypes about the region. So often the emphasis is placed on Appalachia's heritage and its past that you sometimes get the impression that if time hasn't actually come to a halt in these parts, it marches on at a much slower pace here than elsewhere. But then along comes 24-year-old Thomas Massie from Vanceburg, Ky., inventor of a very 21st century virtual reality accessory for personal computers, a device which a surgeon called "truly awesome" in a recent *Business Week* article.

Most of these stories are, at some level, about solving problems — from how to keep a Wheeling, W.Va., municipal park solvent to how to effect social change, from improving education to addressing an environmental disaster-in-progress well over a thousand miles away, one with global consequences. We see Appalachians working with like-minded people from both within and outside the region. In some cases, they borrow solutions devised by others, adapting or improving on them. In other cases, they invent approaches from scratch, then export them to other parts of the country and the world.

But what I've liked especially about the stories in this issue is that they have given me a sense of how all of these endeavors have grown out of the minds, hearts, imaginations, and passions of very real human beings. Blair White, for example, shows how the tufted carpet industry, an industry concentrated largely in the mountains of North Georgia, can trace its beginnings to one young Appalachian girl named Catherine Evans Whitener. It was her fascination with a decorated bedspread handed down in her family and her determination to learn how to create such handiwork herself that launched what is now a $15 billion industry. Thomas Massie reminds me of my son Chris, who in turn reminds me of his father. They all seem to have been born with a drive to figure out how things mechanical work and a delight in machines and tools, especially the ones that operate elegantly (a drive and a delight that are, I must confess, pretty foreign to me). The impetus for both Whitener's and Massie's innovations and enterprises came from deep within their psyches.

For essayists Margaret Young and Don Williams, the problem to be solved is fundamental and personal: how to find work that is, as Young so aptly puts it, "simultaneously challenging and pleasurable and consequential." Both embark on their own particular endeavors in an attempt to find such work. Young goes to western Pennsylvania with the young actors of the Open Door Theater Company, setting out to practice their art in a way that matters to their host communities. Williams, a 42-year-old journalist, comes face to face with the fact that newspaper work won't allow him to do the type of writing he feels is important. He leaves a secure job with the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* to start his own literary journal and publishing company.

Young's essay is indispensable in this issue about risky ventures because it is ultimately about a seminal failure. She reminds us that even failed ventures have value and crucial lessons to teach, that they are well worth the effort even if they don't work out the way they were intended. Williams agrees. "I am confident of success," writes Williams gamely, "but even if I end up driving a taxi, I know I have made the right decision. Nothing I have done has ever seemed more right."

The entrepreneurs and innovators in this issue display imagination and determination, a sense of play and a sense of purpose. I have found it very heartening to spend some time in their company.

Nature still abhors a vacuum — and so do we. Send us your letters. We would like to publish Letters to the Editor in *Now & Then,* but we haven't received any. So if you have something to say about anything you've read here, put your thoughts down on paper and send them to: Editor/*Now & Then*, Box 70556, ETSU, Johnson City TN 37614-0556. We reserve the right to edit.

Now, to take care of some *Now & Then* business: When Jill Oxendine served as interim editor last year, she sent a questionnaire to people throughout the region as a way of generating story ideas from as broad a geographic area as possible. I have followed suit. My sincere thanks to everyone who filled out the query and sent it back to me; fortunately for me, I received many more ideas than I could use. In particular, through the good offices of chair Jesse White and policy advisor Sakina Thompson, the Appalachian Regional Commission sent me back a pile several inches high full of intriguing possibilities.

Among the people who submitted suggestions that did find their way into the pages of this magazine are: Judy Birt of the Buffalo Trace Area Development District in Maysville, Ky.; Tyler Blethen of Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Center; the University of Kentucky's Gurney Norman; and Barry Tarter of the North Georgia Regional Development Center in Dalton, Ga.

Also, with this issue we say *au revoir* to Janet Hearne who has spent two semesters and a summer as an East Tennessee State University student assistant on the magazine. We will miss her intelligence and solid writing, her reliability, her willingness to try her hand at anything we've asked of her, and her sense of humor, always an important asset as deadlines approach. She had written for *Now & Then* before joining us as a student worker, and we sincerely hope that even after some lucky employer discovers her and hires her, she will find the time to write for us again.

— Jane Harris Woodside, editor

Wheeling

Out of the Darkness, Into the Light

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For the past 10 years, Willard the Snowman & friends have been lighting up the winter darkness and brightening Wheeling's present and future.

With snow dusting trees, creeks freezing over, and winds whipping the valley, what could possibly entice over a million people in the dark of winter to leave the comfort of their homes to visit Wheeling, W.Va.?

These folks have seen the light — specifically, Oglebay Park's Winter Festival of Lights.

The 1994 Oglebay Winter Festival of Lights was one of the largest winter light shows in the United States. According to Oglebay officials, 243,000 cars and 2,500 tour buses carried over 1.2 million visitors to this northern panhandle city from throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest regions as well as from Canada.

Before the Festival of Lights, the financial outlook for both the city of Wheeling and its park system seemed bleak. Randy Worls, a sixth generation Wheelingite who has worked with the park since 1954, watched the general downsizing of his hometown with justifiable concern. Factories closed, industries relocated, and I-70, the new interstate, bypassed the heart of Wheeling's business district.

As the park's chief executive officer, Worls has a weighty responsibility. The park itself is not your typical municipal park. It had its beginnings in the late 1920s when Earl Oglebay, an astute Cleveland industrialist, left his summer estate called Waddington Farm to the city of Wheeling "for the educational and recreational purposes of all people."

Today, at 1,500 acres, Oglebay Park has doubled in size from that original 750 acre bequest. It is now a major resort park with an impressive array of facilities. There is the 204-room Wilson Lodge and conference center; 48 year-round cottages; extensive gardens; and a children's zoo including a 1,200-square-foot miniature train display, laser show, and live reindeer. For those interested in sports, Oglebay boasts three 18-hole golf courses, outdoor and indoor pools, and 11 tennis courts. Finally, rounding out the park's offerings are the three-acre Schenk Lake, complete with pedal boats; a nature center; a planetarium; eight gift shops; and a recently opened glass exhibit and demonstration area billed as a tribute to America's first industry.

Richard Cress

Randy Worls.

In this impoverished region, only approximately 1 percent of the $20 million needed annually to run Wheeling's park system is from tax revenue. There are, to be sure, generous donations from private individuals, but by and large, Oglebay Park and its smaller sister facility, Wheeling Park, must generate their own income to keep the programs going and growing. Admission to the family-oriented parks for summer activities such as swimming, tennis, and golf is minimal. Overnight accommodations at Wilson Lodge and

•••

Heidi Hartwiger

weekly cabin rentals, conventions, camps, and special programs help sustain the budget through the off-season, but taken together, park revenues fall short of producing the needed funds.

Worls, named general manager in 1970, knew that by the mid-1980s, an additional source of income would be needed to offset the ever increasing expenses of maintaining the park's facilities and programs. Through research and after discussion with tour consultants, Worls learned that the light show at Niagara Falls in New York was a popular destination for winter bus tours. He decided to see if Wheeling could stage its own festival of lights.

So in 1984, he located and hired the internationally known light display designer Dick Bosch of Phillips International to direct the comprehensive outdoor light display project. Bosch, a native of the Netherlands, came to the job with impressive credentials, having lit up the Taj Mahal, the Tower of London, the Parthenon, and the Great Pyramids.

Worls then added Bob Otten, design consultant for the Wheeling Park Commission, to the team and charged him with overseeing the completion of the initial project, scheduled to take place during the winter of 1985-86. Otten was a graduate of the Parsons School of Design and the Yale Drama School where he majored in lighting. After his arrival in Wheeling in 1946, Otten first worked in lighting and design for the theater at Wheeling's Oglebay Institute, the educational and fine arts organization housed at the park. He then took a position in sales promotion for Stone and Thomas department store for 34 years. After his retirement, Otten went to work for the Wheeling Park Commission at Worls' request as a design consultant.

Visitors discover a 14-foot high baby dinosaur outlined in 500 bulbs standing at West Virginia's tourist welcome center, hinting at the lights to come.

Knowing that Wheeling is a community where people lend a hand whenever help is needed, Worls was pleased, but not altogether surprised, as civic pride surged and the community pulled together to support the new undertaking. Because the park system offered summer employment to many local teens, it was natural that the high school students carried their interest in the park and its activities into the school. With the approval of the Ohio County Board of Education and under the supervision of Otten and shop teachers at Wheeling Park High School, vocational education students fabricated, wired, and helped erect the light displays that first year.

The grand illumination was planned for December 2, 1985. The outlook for a successful event looked dubious. Worls recalls that rain fell almost nonstop for 30 days and 30 nights before the festival's scheduled opening. "Because of the constant rain, we had no opportunity for electrical checks, so we weren't sure what would happen," he says. Still, Worls was a believer.

His faith turned out to be fully justified. When the invited celebrity, NBC personality Willard Scott, threw the switch, Oglebay Park was bathed in light. The animated displays, utilizing 125,000 bulbs stretching across a 125-acre tract of rolling hills, came to life. In addition to stationary displays, reindeer bounded across the hillside, a golfer went through various swing positions, and — what was to become one of the most popular displays — Willard the Snowman twinkled near Schenk Lake.

According to Worls, the public response to that first month-long Winter Festival of Lights was particularly gratifying and overwhelming since there was very little preseason advertising. During December of 1985, 300,000 people in 75,000 cars and 50 tour buses passed over the winding roads through Oglebay Park to view the lights. Although no admission was charged, the Park Commission suggested a $5 per car donation. That admission policy remains unchanged to this day. "We are almost to the point where the revenue from Oglebay's Winter Festival of Lights sustains our budget for the other 10 months of the year," Worls says. With the increased funds generated by the festival, Worls has been able to move forward with the restoration of the seasonal Waddington Gardens surrounding the Oglebay Mansion Museum to their turn-of-the-century splendor.

Of course, the festival has an economic effect that ripples throughout the community. Retail sales in Wheeling topped the $1 million mark that first sea-

Mary Anne Compton

Oglebay Park employees Brad Dorsey and Harrison Fair check bulbs in one of the many light displays.

son as visitors dined in local restaurants and took advantage of overnight accommodations. According to a recent legislative report, retail sales generated in the community during the 1994-95 season grew to approximately $21 million.

Beginning in August, park employees mount displays throughout Oglebay's golf courses and other open areas, with Worls maintaining an environmental vigil to ensure that no negative environmental impact occurs on the park grounds or on its golf courses. When visitors approach the area on I-70 this season, they will discover a 14-foot high baby dinosaur outlined in about 500 bulbs standing at West Virginia's Tourist Welcome Center, hinting at the lights to come at Oglebay Park and throughout Wheeling. These visitors come through the park's gates to drive the six-mile tour that currently features nearly 1 million lights spread over 300 acres.

Mary Anne Compton

Joe Henderson, Lou Winters, and Jay Koehl inspect one of the light displays fabricated by students at the Wheeling Park High School vocational education program.

Because festival planners retire some exhibits and add several each year, many visitors return year after year to see what is new. The big attraction for the 1992-93 season, for example, was an animated display of Cinderella's coach traveling up a hillside to the castle. The Cinderella display was enlarged the next year to include the clock striking 12 and scampering mice pulling a pumpkin. Although Otten often looks ahead to the next year's changes, he generally waits until the festival is underway before considering new displays. Wheeling residents frequently critique each year's offerings and make suggestions for improvements or for new designs.

Wheeling citizens continue to support — and support actively — the Winter Festival of Lights. For example, merchants have turned Wheeling into "The City of Lights" with their sponsorship of over 200 decorative, 8-foot high snowflakes and other light displays located throughout the town. Many residents have reached into their own pockets and erected exhibits in their own yards. Worls admits that occasionally, there is some grumbling about the traffic. But basically, most locals know that especially on Saturday nights from the first weekend of November through the first weekend of January, they need to take the back roads.

Other localities have observed with increasing interest the phenomenal growth and success of Oglebay's Winter Festival. To date, 12 cities, including Roanoke, Va., have received assistance from Oglebay in setting up similar events. In the autumn of 1994, representatives from 20 localities met to exchange ideas and to form a national Festival of Lights organization. They are scheduled to meet once again in Wheeling this coming spring.

This winter, Oglebay Park and the City of Wheeling are commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Oglebay Park Winter Festival of Lights. High school students continue to play a major role in festival preparations. They prepared about 50 percent of the over 40 displays involving 900,000 bulbs planned for the 1995-96 season. A West Liberty, W.Va., company, Pettit Fabricating, handles the exhibits requiring specialized or intricate work.

Otten is pleased with the seven new displays for the 1995-96 season. As visitors enter Oglebay Park, they can see a large animated logo in lights announcing the 10th anniversary. Elves march across the top of the display, while fireworks go off above their heads. Added to the Waddington Gardens area is an animated display featuring a gardener perched on the top step of a 14-foot high ladder. As the water from his hose reaches the ground, small assorted flowers and a 10-foot sunflower light up.

According to Otten, a highlight of the 10th anniversary celebration was the visit of Evi Kelly-Lentz, widow of the beloved clown Emmett Kelly, to Oglebay Park on November 17 for the Fantasy in Lights parade. She threw the switch that turned on the power for the new circus display which had been three years in the planning. Otten received permission to reproduce in lights three famous clowns — Felix Adler, Lou Jacobs, and Emmett Kelly — in an animated light display in front of a striped circus tent of lights. Park visitors can watch Adler juggling, Jacobs walking his dog, and Kelly with his trademark wilted flower.

Another highlight of this 10th anniversary season was that two of the individuals most responsible for the success of the festival were honored at ceremonies this past November 1. Harry Himrod, who has supervised display installation for most of the festival's history, and Bob Otten flicked the switch that began the 1995-1996 season.

Little do the visitors realize as they brave the winter weather to view the light displays that Randy Worls and Bob Otten already are looking ahead to new display surprises for the 1996-97 Oglebay Winter Festival of Lights. N&T

Heidi Hartwiger, a Wheeling, W.Va., native, now lives in exile in Yorktown, Va. She is the author of A Gift of Herbs, *originally published by Down Home Press in 1993 and reprinted by Rodale Press, and* All Join Hands: The Forgotten Art of Playing with Children, *also published by Down Home Press in 1994.*

Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble

THE EVOLUTION OF A REVOLUTION

The Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble has teenagers talking Shakespeare at their local McDonald's.

They call themselves "gentle revolutionaries."

In 1976, a group of young theater students came to the small Appalachian town of Bloomsburg, Pa., to study Chekhov with the late Alvina Krause. At the end of six weeks, the renowned drama professor invited them to stay, with the caveat that if they wanted truly to study theater, they would have to create one. "Great theater is always built on the bedrock of concern for the community," she told them.

Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (BTE) is now in its 18th season and thriving. Conventional wisdom says it shouldn't be. As professional theaters go, it's in the middle of nowhere. The town's population of 12,000 *is* augmented by the 5,000 students at Bloomsburg University. Still, Bloomsburg is not a city; it isn't even a suburb. Wilkes-Barre and Harrisburg are both an hour away. It takes three-and-a-half hours to drive to New York, three hours to drive to Philadelphia.

So where does the audience come from? Most come from within an hour's driving time along the I-80 and I-81 corridors and along both branches of the Susquehanna River. The theater serves about 800,000 people in 10 counties.

Lewisburg Studios Inc.

The gentle revolutionaries of Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble: (top row, l to r) James Goode, Sharon Pabst, Gerard Stropnicky, Whit MacLaughlin; (center) Laurie McCants and Tom Byrn; (bottom) Seth Reichgott, David Moreland, and A. Elizabeth Dowd. Standing on the right is TCG/Pew National Theatre Artist Resident Daniel Stein.

In 1981, the company bought an old 1930s movie house and renovated it with the help of the Appalachian Regional Commission. "It cost $760,000," says ensemble director Jerry Stropnicky, an Oradell, N.J., native and one of the original group who came to study with Krause. "We're still paying it off." Then in 1984, the Mitrani family donated an old shirt factory, now The Mitrani Production Center, home of the company's rehearsal hall, scene shop, and costume shop. "We're still working on improving it."

Many new theaters employ a "give 'em fun" strategy, presenting musicals and light comedy early on to establish an audience before presenting more serious or experimental work. "We never bought into that," says Stropnicky. "We always did plays we needed to do, plays with meaning and relevance. Now, we did do *Wait Until Dark* one summer when we were broke. But our heart wasn't in it, and nobody came anyway. It was an object lesson: You don't serve anybody by not being true to yourself."

The company comprises nine ensemble members and 13 administrative and technical staff. Some staff members

BY LAURENE SCALF

We're no longer interested in doing things on stage to outrage or slap the audience around. Being out there to shock comes from a sense of not belonging.

are natives, but the ensemble members are not. All of them, however, are now bona fide Bloomsburgians, says Stropnicky. Members must live in the Bloomsburg area for a year before joining the company, and they must continue to live there as long as they work for BTE.

Alvina Krause believed that theater should be as important to a community as schools, hospitals, and libraries. BTE provides jobs and brings into town customers for other businesses. "When I moved here, no restaurants were open past 8 o'clock," Stropnicky says. "Now there are three."

But having BTE in Bloomsburg benefits the community in more profound ways as well. For example, BTE members take an active role in the community. Stropnicky himself serves on the parks board. "Community involvement is more than throwing a cocktail party," he notes. "It's having a home, raising a garden.

"Almost all actors in American theater move around, going from job to job. That's not a bad life for those who want it. But what happens is that art becomes anonymous. The actors can't make the connections that make their work as live artists valid."

Over time, when actors are actually permanent residents of the town where they perform, they becomes less foreign and therefore less threatening to the community. That cuts both ways, says Stropnicky. "It profoundly affects the kind of theater we want to do. We're no longer interested in doing things on stage to outrage or slap the audience around. I know many talented young urban artists who are out to shock. Being out there to shock comes from a sense of not belonging."

The ensemble mounted a production of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to address the issue of sexual abuse. "It's sort of a horrific play in the way it's usually done," Stropnicky says. "An unwieldy woman is abused into submission — starved and deprived of sleep. We did the show in Elizabethan times but in contemporary terms. Instead of a play about a man teaching a woman how to behave, we did a show about a woman showing a man how a man shows a woman how to behave. It was immensely popular. People talked about it a lot."

Sometimes the company will tackle a subject more directly. A couple of years ago, a cross was burned in Bloomsburg to protest the presence of blacks on the university campus. BTE revived a play by Larry Shue they had done a few years before, titled *The Foreigner*. "It exposes those guys for the jerks they are. The theater was full for all the performances, not just because it was a good production and funny. It was a way for the community to come together around an issue."

Real community success, says Stropnicky, is having a teenager at McDonald's talking about the last show. A man who worked for the gas company, riding in the company service truck, heard on the radio that BTE was in financial straits and stopped by to donate $25. Public discussions, called "talk backs," are held after some performances. "When we did Jo Carson's play *Daytrips* [about a woman caring for her elderly grandmother and her mother who has Alzheimer's Disease], we held talk backs after every performance. We invited the Area Agency on Aging to attend. At least 100 people would stay every night, sometimes for hours, to talk about caregiving. That shows the power of that play and the power of theater. Theater provided a link — people saw they were not alone — and provided referrals to avenues of help."

Dave Ashby Photography

Bloomsburg's Alvina Krause Theatre, purchased in 1981, was originally a movie house. The theatre is still paying off the renovation costs.

The theater's current season includes an original work which comes directly from the community. *Letters to the Editor,* developed with the aid of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), dramatizes actual letters to local newspapers. "It's one of my favorite projects," says ensemble member Tom Byrn [see sidebar on p. 10]. "Four of us researched letters going back 150 years. I feel I really got to know the community, hearing the voices of several generations of Bloomsburgians."

Those generations have been mostly Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Welsh. In fact, some people in the area still speak Welsh, Stropnicky says. "There is no Asian and little African culture. Our classroom work explores other cultures." BTE has toured its Theatre in the Classroom program for 17 years and reaches approximately 50,000 school children annually. "Some kids we

met in kindergarten now bring their kids to shows." The school program changes from year to year. "This year, it's Greek mythology. Next year, it's coal stories."

Coal has played a large part in the area's history, as it has in other Appalachian areas. The residents like to think of themselves as Pennsylvanians, however, not as Appalachians. The distinction is spurious, says Stropnicky. "Main Street *is* Route 11, you know? You keep driving south, and you won't see a whole lot of difference: the statistics, the income level, the houses. Black lung payments are a large source of income here. Anthracite coal mining has been a major industry — though the mines are mostly gone now."

The ensemble has made mistakes, both individually and corporately. When it comes to attracting audiences and mounting high quality productions, they are indeed thriving. But they took on too much debt; they have made mistakes in hiring and firing. "We're trying every day to anticipate the next land mine or banana peel," Stropnicky says. "We'll make more mistakes. There is no road map."

Nor has the ensemble met all the goals with which it started out 18 years ago. Stropnicky feels they'll never be met. "At least we're striving. In the first years, we just wanted to get up and going. The question of community and what it meant was foremost, but we got distracted building the theater and just getting along. We're taking time to ask questions now."

The company recently revised its long-range plan and is in the midst of an effort to eliminate its debt. "We reached bottom last spring," says Stropnicky. "We've initiated our The Show Must Go On campaign to raise $450,000 over and above our operating budget, or approximately $225,000 in each of the next two years." During the first four months alone, the campaign netted $170,000. "Once our finances are stabilized, we can add and keep good actors. We also want to provide babysitters for audience members and work with agencies to bus in senior citizens."

BTE has an annual operating budget of $600,000 and receives its funding from the NEA, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the town of Bloomsburg. A great deal of support comes from area families. Individual donations totaled $73,000 last year, mostly in amounts of $25, $50, or $100. Front money for productions comes from season subscription sales. The theater has 1,100 subscribers this year, up from 1,050 last year. "Eighty percent of our members renew each year. It takes a lot of effort. It's not the be-all and end-all, but it is very important."

Several years ago, someone offered the company a large contribution — if the contributor could have a say in play selection. It caused a lot of tension within the organization. "At one point, the actors in the ensemble held closed door meetings. Up to that point, all of our meetings had always been open to the entire staff and the board of trustees. That was a terrible mistake. As soon as the doors closed, we had betrayed our mission, and it affected what was on stage.

"As tempting as such an offer may be, you need to maintain your mission integrity. The ultimate solution was opening the doors, letting the air in, not talking in separate rooms. In the last three years, the atmosphere and dialogue have improved so much, I can't imagine that happening again. In the end, the person gave the gift without strings. The ensemble's relationship now with the board and with the staff has never been better."

Like most other arts groups, BTE is keeping a close eye on the controversy surrounding the NEA. The company will receive $20,125 from the NEA this year. They could survive without that, Stropnicky says, "but is it a proper function of government to educate and explore? I think it is. If the NEA has accomplished anything, it has made art available to more people than ever before. BTE is a case in point. If the NEA goes under, the Met Opera will do fine, but small places will not."

Marlin Wagner

Agave (Laurie McCants) postures over her dead son Pentheos surrounded by the chorus in Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble's 1992 production of Robert Bagg's translation of Euripedes' *Women of Bakkhos*.

Though unusual, BTE is not unique. All across America, a number of professional theaters exist in small communities. Thanks to organizations like Theatre Communications Group in New York and Atlanta-based Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theatres South), BTE has found other theater groups similar to themselves: Touchstone Theatre in Bethlehem, Pa.; The Road Company in Johnson City, Tenn., and Dell'Arte Players Company in Blue Lake, Calif., among others. "They're doing stuff along our lines, very eclectic in style. And the Internet is a great discovery. Through it, we're becoming more aware of one another. We're not wholly isolated."

The value of such companies to the communities in which they live and work is sometimes appreciated by the community, sometimes not. The gentle revolutionaries at Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble don't have to worry about that. In a January 1995 readers' poll conducted by a local newspaper, BTE was named Best Community Asset. N&T

Laurene Scalf is a writer and actor who lives in Louisville, Ky. An ensemble member of Johnson City, Tenn.'s The Road Company, she is the former assistant editor of Now & Then.

THE ROAD TO DUBOIS

A troupe of young actors hit Appalachia with some talent, lots of enthusiasm, and sheer crazy momentum.

BY MARGARET YOUNG

It was our senior year at Yale, and we wanted to change the world. We decided that a small town in Appalachian Pennsylvania was just the place to do it.

We'd been doing Brecht and Gorky and Lanford Wilson and most of all, children's plays in inner city New Haven, Connecticut, and we thought theater could matter, could make a difference in people's lives. We read about this company called Cornerstone Theater — out of Harvard just a few years previous — and thought they sounded pretty cool. They had done *Hamlet* in Montana and *Tartuffe* in Nebraska — tiny, tiny towns. Casting community members, adapting the script to reflect local concerns and flavors — they had gotten big grants and Hollywood supporters and coverage in places like *The New Yorker*.

We could do that, we thought, with our 22-year-old optimism. We just need to find a town, just need to set it all up in the spring while attending school full-time and recruiting a few more people as crazy as we were . . .

Our artistic director was from Philadelphia and knew someone who could help us around the state's arts network. And Pennsylvania was a reasonable driving distance from Connecticut; we could go check a place out and be back in time for Monday classes. But we wanted to leave the influence of the East Coast, the big cities there, and find a place that would really need us. So we drew a line right down the middle of the state and sent a letter to every town in a certain size range west of that, a letter addressed to "Mayor."

We got one reply. Lots of those places didn't even have a mayor, but DuBois did, and his office happened to be right down the hall from Sam Kennedy's. Kennedy was managing Main Street, a downtown revitalization project, and had been trying to figure out what to do with the old DuBois Playhouse since it had stopped showing porno movies. A few phone calls, meetings, contract negotiations, and long car rides later, we were moving into the freshly uncondemned fourth floor of the General Pershing Hotel on a summer afternoon in 1988, right above the Playhouse. We were the eight members (or nine or ten or six or seven, depending on the month in which you were doing the counting) of the Open Door Theater Company.

So what precisely were we going to do in that Allegheny foothills town? We were going to try a bit of everything, it seemed, as we hatched out and patched together what our mission and strategy should be: a couple of children's plays, classroom and after-school workshops — nothing like kid appeal to win over the population; some scenes and sketches and a dance number for a Playhouse benefit; a Mark Twain one-man recycled from college; *Twelfth Night*; a murder mystery dinner theater. But the centerpiece of this and every residency, we had decided from the outset, would be the collaborative show — something adapted to reflect the place, using as many local people as we could fit into it, or even a piece developed and written there, based on area history and culture.

Ever ambitious in those days, we attempted the latter approach in DuBois. We read books, we held oral history evenings, we looked and listened. And we got depressed. The past was vivid, full of ethnic conflict and the booming logging and bituminous coal mining industries and intense communal bonds. The present was the mall and the Friday night cruise; kids leaving for jobs elsewhere; rich people abandoning the downtown for the planned artificial lake-and-golf course development on the other side of the highway strip; and old people sitting in the retirement high-rise, remembering their farms, their wars.

I feel like the Ancient Mariner sometimes, grabbing at strangers to drone, "There was this theater company, this town . . ."

Our play came out a little abstract and talky — and perhaps a little pretentious. It was about heroes and storytelling and a community's relationship to its past. It wasn't unrelentingly sad, but it wasn't too cheerful either. It definitely wasn't what the people of DuBois wanted to see, but we thought it was the truth.

What could anyone expect from a bunch of self-centered, idealistic kids fresh from college? We were making everything up as we went along, using the town as our test site. But if we hadn't been stumbling around in that broken-down movie house, filling it up with lights and kids and backdrops commissioned from local artists, nobody would have been. We were enjoying ourselves thoroughly, and so were the many residents who turned out to participate. They threw us parties, knitted us

CITY BOY HITS A SMALL TOWN BIG TIME

A former Open Door member finds a new lease on life as an actor living and working in Bloomsburg, Pa.

Tom Byrn, a Long Island, N.Y. native, had only been in Chicago for six months when an old high school friend called with a proposition. He and a group of his friends were founding a new theater company called Open Door. "He invited me to come to Pennsylvania and observe," remembers Byrn, who had recently graduated from Vassar College as an English major with a lot of theater experience. "It was fascinating — and it was a job. So I ended up joining them. We went to very small towns and lived there six months and brought them theater."

After a year and a half, it became evident that Open Door was failing. "We had two residencies lined up for the following six to eight month period. Both fell through in about a two-week period. The company members were committed, but when the actual work fell through, we got discouraged."

Byrn went to Long Island to stay with his parents for a couple of months before he auditioned for Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (BTE) and got an internship. "BTE knew of Open Door and was familiar with our work. Open Door tried to do with several communities what BTE does with one." [See Young, "The Road to DuBois," p. 9.] Byrn, 28, is now in his fifth year with BTE, his third year as a full member.

Byrn has found there's little room for anonymity in a town the size of Bloomsburg. "People recognize you from shows. In the post office, people know who you are and where you live and what you do in town. If people like a show, they'll stop you at the store and tell you. And they'll tell you if they don't like it. It makes you feel responsible for what you do. You have to answer for your art."

His roles have included Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol,* "though I'm switching to Bob Cratchit this year. Macbeth as a role has been a personal fave," Byrn notes. He has participated in the Theater in the Classroom school tour three times in the past four seasons. His goal is to direct for the company. "An even bigger goal is to write something for BTE," he confesses.

Working within an ensemble has its pluses and minuses, says Byrn. "What's gained is trust and the ability to — not necessarily anticipate — but to have an instinct for what somebody might do. A common language develops when you're with the same group of people. That comes, too, of working with the same directors over a period of years. "

On the minus side, "you get to know people so well that you look for mannerisms, or you know what arguments they might use to get out of doing something. People call it a family. That's a cliché, but it's true. A family is about understanding, but they can get on your nerves."

If people like a show, they'll stop you at the store and tell you. And they'll tell you if they don't like it. You have to answer for your art.

Byrn maintains contact with his previous theatrical family, the members of the Open Door. "There was a time when we thought Open Door might get back together, but we all kind of went our separate ways. We still keep in touch. There's still contact — and a lot of memories.

"If there's a correlation between Open Door and BTE, it has to do with community, knowing the audience you're playing for and being responsible to it, knowing what the purpose is in what you do. BTE is a very rare thing in some ways, and I'm glad I found something that — though sometimes difficult in its isolation —provides focus and concentration and never lets you forget why you do this in the first place."

— Laurene Scalf

slippers, praised us to the skies.

The next residency, up in Meadville, Pennsylvania, about ninety miles to the northwest, was much smoother and more professional. The one after that, out east in the coalfields of Schuylkill County, went even better. Our collaborative *Midsummer Night's Dream* set at a coal mine got national coverage, and our original local history play was well-received.

Then, for a multitude of rather boring reasons, we couldn't find another town, and the company split up. It's five years later now. Some of us are still in theater; some are still teaching kids. All of us were deeply affected by our experience together. We gather, at each other's weddings mostly these days, and tell stories like old soldiers.

As a writer, I've found those stories impossible to ignore. One book is finished, and the next one has begun. And I'm still not through with telling about what we did. I feel like the Ancient Mariner sometimes, grabbing at strangers to drone, "There was this theater company, this town . . ."

I have moved back to Meadville, where both the Academy Theater and the arts council where we put on plays are thriving. Here, and in Schuylkill County, dozens of kids and adults we got started in theater have gone on to direct, major in, teach, or otherwise devote themselves to the art.

In DuBois, though, the Playhouse is empty, last I heard. When we returned for a company visit in 1990, we performed at the high school and the mall. Many people remembered us fondly there, but we were a little embarrassed by how inexperienced we were in our first residency. How enormous the economic and social ills of DuBois with logging and mining gone now, how small our efforts, how foolish our cheerful exuberance.

It's funny, though. When we're sitting around telling our

"war stories," DuBois always looms the largest and the most colorful. It had the shabbiest living conditions, the most scraping of all our tiny budgets, the most underrehearsed and underproduced performances. We slept too little and drank too much, we shouted at each other and fell in and out of love, we crashed our cars and didn't pay royalties. We also began to learn how to get along with each other and a town, how to cook good food and throw a party with no money, how to make do — onstage and off — with whatever was around. As we grew wiser and more professional, we calmed down and didn't try to do a hundred things at once all the time. But we also grew more cautious, more anxious about our lack of money, training, a designer, knowledge, a future.

Courtesy of John Hornung

Members of the Open Door Theater Company. Margaret Young is center front in the striped skirt. Tom Byrn, now with Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble, is standing on the right.

We used to quote the British acting teacher from Yale who on being informed of our plans said dryly: "Energy and the appearance of talent will get you far." He meant it as a warning, a put-down, and we took it as a challenge. Now I think I see how right he was in spite of himself. It's true we had much more enthusiasm than talent for what we were doing, and the sheer crazy momentum of that did get us far: not in terms of years or fame or financial reward, but rich in experience and warm community and a lifelong dissatisfaction with any work that is not simultaneously challenging and pleasurable and consequential. And we achieved these things precisely *because* we were ignorant and unprepared. Mature, seasoned artists would have known that what we were doing was impossible — they would never have set out on the road to DuBois in the first place.

Call us another batch of American Dreamers — gold searchers, commune founders, river runners, Walden cabin builders, Ghost Dancers, acid trippers, South Pole voyagers. We won and lost, succeeded and failed, made heroes and fools of ourselves. I hope there are plenty more like us. N&T

Margaret Young has written a book based on her years with the Open Door Theater Company called Fringe Kitchens. *Chapters of it have recently appeared or are forthcoming in* Literal Latté, Terra Nova, *and* The Machineel Journal. *She received her master's in creative writing from the University of California, Davis, and now lives in Meadville, Pa., where she teaches writing and drama and runs a coffeehouse performance series.*

Will Work

One day when I was five, Dad did not come home
from the coal-black underground.
I don't know what I'm going to do, Mom said.
Dad always knew what to do. Mom marched right

down to the five-and-dime before the mine was sealed,
came home with a job and a big, big toy dump truck.
She was there forever, all the widows said, helping them find
plastic flowers, thread for mending, a canary in a cage . . .

until they found her on the floor among the garden tools.
Without her face, it's just not the same place, they said.
But Mom is buried there, under the toy dump trucks.
I was undertaker. I dug a deep hole,

hummed her down with a giant steam shovel,
varoom-varoomed the trusty dump truck,
pulled its lever and closed her grave
with a load of sand and old evergreen shade —
sand worked forever in the sandbox Dad made
beside his transplanted hemlock tree . . .
finger holes dig deep unto dark

near to where Dad had prayed
after Mom heard him say, clear as morning,
"We got trouble," and her lips were sealed.

Every Sunday I know just what to do:
drive Mom to Dad in the rickety dump truck.
On the tailings out there
I never know what to do.

— John Means

John Means was born in Oak Ridge, Tenn., during World War II and grew up in southern West Virginia. For the past 25 years, he has taught English and science courses at Hagerstown (Md.) Junior College. He has published poetry and haiku in several journals. His book An Interpretive Guide to Maryland's Catoctin Mountain Parks *will be published this year.*

A New Beginning for A New Millennium

When the best job in Knoxville is no longer enough, it's time for a quest.

by Don Williams

I have been much taken lately with the idea of angels — as well as with their counterparts in pagan traditions, those animal- or spirit-helpers who come out of the woodwork when a hero begins a quest. It seems I've experienced such serendipitous aid lately. Not that I'm a hero, but I am beginning a quest, which has me feeling a tad more adventurous and heroic these days than I have in a dozen years or so — that is, when I'm not feeling like a self-indulgent dreamer stumbling blindly in the wilderness. Worse yet, a dreamer who has put his family's fortunes at risk.

Hmmm . . . I've laid out what's at stake here a little more starkly than I'd intended.

I'm writing this essay in answer to a question put to me in a dozen different ways in recent weeks. But it boils down to this: Why would a 42-year-old working journalist with a mortgage, a wife, and three kids give up a secure job that brought him a measure of regional fame in order to enter the murky waters of small-time publishing and free-lance writing?

As a columnist and feature-writer for 12 years, including 10 at *The Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel,* I have interviewed celebrities, won awards, had articles published all over the country (courtesy of wire services), and have frequently been asked to speak in public. Why leave such a bully pulpit to start *New Millennium Writings,* a journal of fiction, essays, poetry, interviews, and graphics — with no guarantee of success?

The answer is simple: The well of inspiration was running dry; the landscape was withering. It was time to freshen the vines. In short, a quest was in order. I had put off facing up to this for some months, even years. Recent changes in the publishing industry, however, had brought on a spiritual crisis involving my very self-identity. I realize how romantic, even foolish, that answer sounds to some, but that's all right. I confess to being a romantic.

I saw a cartoon in a *New Yorker* magazine 20 years ago that has summed up for me the primary difference between romantics and realists ever since. It showed a baseball scoreboard stretching to infinity. After countless innings, the score read: Romantics 1, Realists 0. In my mind, the romantics will always be ahead 1-0. That's because the essential difference between the two is the difference between believing and not believing or, as I prefer to put it, perceiving and not perceiving a raw wonder at the core of existence. It's the kind of belief or perception that causes teenagers to stick out a thumb and hitchhike to New York or Mexico and once prompted my wife, my sister, and me to drive a 1965 yellow VW van to the Redwood Forest.

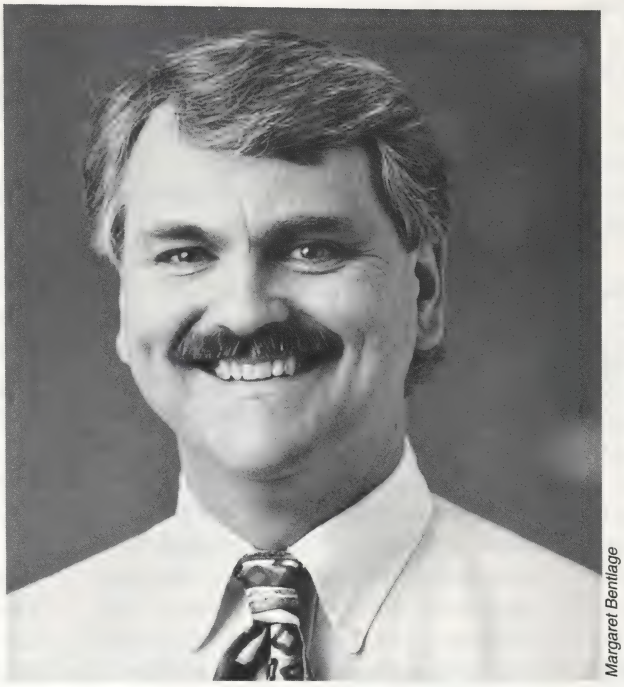
Mythologist Joseph Campbell once told journalist Bill Moyers (romantics both) that when you see lightning strike and go "Ah!" that "Ah!" refers to wonder or divinity. The point is that as a newspaperman, I wasn't able to invoke that "wonder or divinity" as often as, say, novelists and poets do — or even as often as I had once done as a newspaperman. Part of the reason is that daily journalism tends towards a facile realism.

As I wrote in a 1991 *News-Sentinel* column that sparked some controversy in the office, "The daily truth is a meager kind of truth . . . served up in fragmentary articles, written largely upside down and backwards — punchiest fact first, least interesting last — in what is called the 'inverted pyramid.' That's why so many stories peter off to a whimper, rather than build to a bang. Be prepared to do battle if you would do it differently."

I was prepared to do it differently. My goal, when I started as a journalist, was to become a stylist — the kind of writer who could bring readers into stories as if entering rooms. I wanted to make them taste my stories, smell them, feel them with a tactile sensation. I wanted to render the subjects unforgettable. In short, I was ambitious, working under the influence of the color-

ful, expansive New Journalists of the 1970s, like Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, and Norman Mailer. These pioneers encouraged local writers everywhere to attempt large-scale reporting, stylish writing, and subjectively detailed character studies and analyses.

For a time, we could get away with it. I interviewed 10 out of the 12 astronauts who walked on the moon and wrote 5,000 words based on their eloquence. On the 20th anniversary of the first moon landing, I wanted others to read about astronauts who talked like poets or prophets rather than slide-rule toting nerds giving one-line answers. As late as 1993-94, I wrote twice that much and more for a series of articles about Libba Moore Gray, a children's writer who faced and eventually succumbed to death from breast cancer.



Margaret Bentlage

Don Williams.

In smaller, yet still ample swatches, I wove visions by poets and preachers and schizophrenics. I participated in Army war games, "pre-life regressions," rafted down a Class IV river, flew in glider planes and hot air balloons. I interviewed murderers and moonshiners and quilt-makers. I wrote an essay about how Elvis is like Ramses II and chronicled the experiences of a woman who felt life stirring in her womb even as she heard death rattling in her cancerous lungs.

I look back on such stories wishing I had written them better but satisfied that I at least tried to bring a fresh perspective to them. In short, I managed more often than not to reveal something in the human spirit, even amid squalor, that elicited a sense of wonder.

There was a time when I worked the daily beat with expectations that every so often, I would uncover a gem and be given the time and space in which to polish it. Increasingly, I came to realize that those days were gone, along with my enthusiasm, and it showed.

A new kind of journalism has taken over the industry. I call it McNews Lite. Pick up a copy of *USA Today,* and you'll see what I mean. Graphics dominate, and the prose is brief and homogenized. It is tasty in a fast-food kind of way — but not very filling. Newspaper publishers and corporate executives all across the country have shrunk from the honorable task of making distinctions between good writing and bad. They have laid down the blanket edict that "less is more."

I don't blame local editors for this. It is the corporate industry that has rendered passé the newspaper's traditional role of providing context and color and philosophical clarity. It is no accident that the average reader can't tell you what the heck is going on in Bosnia even after reading 100 newspaper articles on the subject.

Eventually I had to face the prospect that my most interesting, colorful, in-depth writing opportunities, at least as a newspaperman, likely lay well behind me and that to save myself as a craftsman, if not as an artist, I had best move on.

EVERYTHING WAS FALLING INTO PLACE, GOADING ME TOWARD A DECISION THAT BOTH TERRIFIED AND ENTHRALLED.

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Fortunately, the timing was right.

In 10 years as a reporter and columnist, I had often made it my business to write about books. As a result, I had made a lot of acquaintances and some friends among serious writers. I had published several short stories and magazine articles on the side, and I had a novel more-or-less finished. Still, leaving the work habits of a decade is not an easy thing, and I hedged, clinging to "the best job in Knoxville," as I often called it. As late as July, I reported on a exhibition of the great sculptor Auguste Rodin at the Knoxville Museum of Art. I accompanied a group of seeing-impaired people and actually felt through thin cotton gloves one man's vision made real. Even with eyes closed, I experienced awe. In what other line of work would I be so privileged?

Still, as I wrestled with the decision to leave the paper, everything began pointing to its rightness. The company was cutting back on editorial space in the paper, and even though my series on Libba Moore Gray won the 1995 Malcolm Law Award (the top statewide journalism honor for individual writing), I knew I would never again have the opportunity to write such an in-depth newspaper story. About that time, I got wind that the paper was offering early retirements or "buyouts." Even though I'm far from retirement age, I inquired about it. I learned that I could leave with a nest egg to carry me through the transition to a new phase of my career.

I had often talked to friends about publishing a book of my best articles. I would call it *Heroes, Sheroes and Zeroes,* and I'm compiling it even now. Years back, I gained permission from *The News-Sentinel,* in keeping with a long-standing tradition, to reprint my bylined works in other forums. I had magazine-style essays and articles on a dizzying range of subjects ready for print. I was also drawn to the idea of founding a literary journal or magazine, anchoring stories and poems

around interviews with authors I had met.

Serendipity visited.

John Richardson, a friend of mine, let me know that his late godfather, Lee Orlin Mead, had left him some money. Mead had a strong interest in good writing, and John wanted to give $1,000 to jump-start a literary journal that would encourage other writers.

I decided to hold a contest, using that money for the prize. This was, by now, a respectable way to go. Scores, if not hundreds, of such contests are held each year. I've sent $10 to each of at least a dozen short story contests in the past two years alone. If successful, my contest would more than pay for itself. It would help establish a subscription base and help fund printing and other expenses for the journal. With this plan in mind, I dipped an oar into the wine-dark sea and began my quest. In short, I rented a post office box.

When I look back on it, that was the hardest thing to bring myself to do. It wasn't the princely rental fee of $54 that scared me. It was more the fear of venturing out so . . . concretely. But there was no getting around it. In order to start a magazine, I had to have a post office box.

With the box key in hand, it was easier to take the next step. I chose an epic title for my venture, *New Millennium Writings,* and hired a graphic artist to design a logo. We settled on the image of a three-dimensional-looking star rising above its own reflection on a watery horizon, and I sent my logo off, along with $245, to the U.S. Trademark Office. Then I began placing ads in literary magazines.

Still, I had yet to cross the Rubicon. I could have turned back — and was sorely tempted. For weeks, I agonized over whether I was doing the right thing. I talked it over with my wife and friends. I went to church and took communion. I meditated. I wrote lists, pro and con. I lay awake at night trying to decide whether to take the buyout.

"Signs" kept arriving in the form of unsolicited help.

One day, the phone rang at *The News-Sentinel.* I picked up the receiver and found myself talking to a small-time publisher from Nashville. In a few minutes, she had told me all about how her publishing company had gotten started and gave me ideas about beginning a flow chart to help deal with the hundreds of details involved in turning dogeared manuscripts into books. I sought advice from a dozen different publishers in the following days.

I'M WORKING HARDER THAN EVER, BUT IT'S FOR A VISION THAT IS MY OWN.

Then I got a call from a woman named Jeanne Hall. She had written a manuscript called *Freedom from Fear* about a Korean War hero named Bob Durham and his relationship to God. I wrote a story about him for the paper, and Jeanne and Bob were much taken by the article. They asked me to edit their book and see it through to publication. I liked what they had written. Bob was well-known, well-connected, and well-loved in his community. I knew that together, we could sell some books.

"I'll publish your book," I heard myself saying. It has been a challenge, but the book is going to press as this is written.

Inspiration and help continued to arrive.

A friend of my wife was looking for someone to read a novel he had written. It turned out to be wonderful, and I imagined publishing 20 pages of it in the first issue of *New Millennium Writings.* Excited to have material actually in hand, I phoned novelist John Updike, whom I had previously interviewed for *The News-Sentinel,* to see if he would consent to be the subject of my first interview in the journal. He said yes!

Emboldened, I phoned seven writers I knew and admired and asked them to serve on an editorial board of advisers. These were people whose acquaintance I had made when writing about them for the paper. Without hesitation, each agreed to serve as judge and adviser.

Everything was falling into place, goading me toward a decision that both terrified and enthralled. My boss suggested that, should I decide to leave the paper, I could continue to write my weekly column, and I liked that idea. A college professor suggested that there might be an occasional teaching assignment for me. My brother Rod, who had some publishing experience and was taking an accounting course, agreed to help with various aspects of the journal. My in-laws, Don and Bev Tredup who own Accurate Printing in Kenosha, Wis., offered to provide extraneous printing free of charge, and their son Jim saw it through. Although they are not set up to publish thick books, I have a logo and letterhead equal to those of any literary journal on the market.

Eventually, I went to my boss and said, "I'd like to take the buyout now." We put it in writing.

These days, when I'm not terrified, I'm elated. I'm working harder than ever, but it's for a vision that is my own. Nothing I have done has ever seemed more right. I am confident of success, but even if I end up driving a taxi, I know I have made the right decision. It was way past time for me to leave a job I found more suffocating day by day. I sometimes feel like a panther let out of a dark box. Temporarily blinded by the light, still I revel in the freedom and room to roam.

Sam Keen, an East Tennessean who found fame and fortune in the so-called "men's movement," writes in several books about realizing one's "personal mythology." It is a concept that allows you to see yourself through the lenses of stories and myths told in every generation. Keen basically asks the question: If life is not heroic, then why bother?

It is a romantic point of view — but then, I've already owned up to being a romantic. N&T

NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS

Don Williams, who hales from Sevier County, Tenn., has been an award-winning reporter for 10 years at The Knoxville News-Sentinel. *He is now editor of* New Millennium Writings *which is scheduled to appear in March of 1996.*

Peacock Alley Revisited

by Blair White

A one-woman revival of a traditional embroidery technique blossoms into a major industry.

South of Chattanooga, Tenn., and north of Atlanta is Dalton, Ga. Here, along U.S. Highway 41, roadside stands from the mid-1930s until the mid-1970s beckoned the traveler with lines of flapping chenille bedspreads blown by the breezes produced by passing autos.

This particular stretch of the two-lane "Dixie Highway," stretching from upper Michigan to Miami, Fla., was called Bedspread Alley, Bedspread Row, Bedspread Boulevard, or Peacock Alley. It was the marketplace for the chenille bedspread, harbinger of the tufted carpet industry.

Before there was a tufted bedspread industry — in fact, before there was a Dalton — early American settlers made bedspreads using an embroidered candlewicking technique brought over by immigrants from England and France. Traditional candlewicking was created by using several strands of a coarse, soft-white cording, which resembled the wicks used in making candles, thus providing the inspiration for its name.

In 1820, an altered form of candlewicking came into popular use. In repairing a homespun spread, it had been discovered that a mended place could be changed into a decorative area simply by fluffing out the ends of the darning threads and stitching a design around the darned and fluffed area. Both this and the original method of candlewicking gained popularity throughout the United States, reaching its highest development on Southern plantations by the 1850s. It faded out until a revival began in 1895 in Whitfield County, Ga. This revival utilized a similar but not identical method of candlewicking called "chenille," "tufting," or, less often, "turfting."

Credit for this revival is given to Catherine Evans Whitener. Catherine Evans was born in 1880 in the Whitfield County community of Gordon Springs, Ga., about 15 miles west of Dalton. At the age of 12, Whitener visited her cousin, Milton Tate, and saw a family heirloom bedspread. She was so taken by the spread and its design that she was determined to have a spread just like it one day.

Three years later, Whitener decided to make that bedspread, a task her mother predicted she would never finish. To make the spread, Whitener seamed together flour sacks, placed the material on the floor, and, using quilting frames, marked it off into 3-inch squares. She then spun white thread into a 12-ply yarn, which she threaded into a curved bodkin needle, and

Courtesy of The Carpet and Rug Institute

Catherine Evans Whitener.

started working her design, a version of the Irish Chain quilt pattern. Whitener used a tufting stitch that she is said to have developed herself; the stitch is actually a running stitch of yarn sewn first into the base sheeting, then cut between the stitches to form the tuft.

When the pattern was completed, the sheeting was laundered in boiling water, causing it to shrink around the tuft threads, locking them in place. Hanging the completed spread on a clothesline to dry also allowed the sun to help bleach both the sheeting and the yarn. The breeze further fluffed the yarn, creating an even tighter lock on the tufts.

Whitener finished her spread and a year later, having forgotten how much trouble the first spread had been, decided to make another. This design she called Spear and Circle. Four years later, when Whitener's oldest brother Henry got married in 1900, she made a spread as a wedding gift. Her brother's sister-in-law liked the spread so well, she asked Whitener to make one for her. This she did, but she had trouble establishing a price. The cloth and thread cost Whitener $1.25, and she decided to charge another $1.25 for her work, bringing the grand total for the first tufted spread ever sold to $2.50.

Other people recognized the beauty of Whitener's tufted bedspreads, and soon orders started coming in. Those first spreads had been marked off with a pencil, a time-consuming task. Whitener found an easier way. She would place a finished spread on the floor and cover it with the sheeting for the next one. She then rubbed the cloth with a tin lid that had in turn been rubbed on a meat skin. This caused the pattern to appear on the sheeting as black dots, greatly cutting down the production time.

An Industry is Born

Over the next few years, Whitener continued making and selling her work.

As her customers showed off their spreads to others, more and more people decided that they would like one for their very own.

As her customers showed off their spreads to others, more and more people decided that they would like one for their very own. Finally, the orders increased so much that she was unable to fill them fast enough. She began to let work out to her friends and neighbors, teaching them all how to make tufted spreads. Some became competitors, but since there was more than enough work to go around, it didn't really much matter.

Courtesy of the Dalton-Whitfield Historical Society

Inspection table at the LaRose Bedspread Company.

Her arrangement with her own workers was that they would come to her house and pick up the stamped muslin sheeting and the natural colored thread. When they came to return the finished piece, they would then pick up more stamped sheeting.

More people found employment in the fledgling industry as haulers, transporting the spreads between Whitener and the tufters. While the very first bedspreads were made of pieced muslin, soon nearby mills began to make sheeting especially for the spreads. In addition to eliminating the need for piecing the base sheet together, this manufactured sheeting shrank in both directions, creating a greater lock on the tufted threads. A local cotton mill started producing the thread Whitener needed for her tufters, further reducing production time.

As the popularity of chenille increased, potential buyers began to want spreads with color to fit in with the customers' decor. Whitener responded by writing letters to numerous mills inquiring about colorfast yarns. She located a dye plant in Providence, R.I., which sent her samples of its colors. Whitener picked out the colors she wanted and sent them along with some of her white yarns to be dyed. The colors held, even during the boiling process, and soon Whitener was sending quantities of white yarn to be dyed. The demand for dye work became so great that the firm, the Franklin Process Dye Company, built a plant in Greenville, S.C., and then another in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Many of the designs for the spreads were borrowed from quilts: the Bowknot Rose, Flower Basket, Double Wedding Ring, and the Wild Rose, among others. Others Whitener devised from saucers, plates, and other round-edged objects, which provided the curves she liked for her patterns. One of her favorites, the Washbowl, was literally drawn from a large washbowl. Some clever soul created the infamous peacock design, probably as a way to use some of the odds and ends of yarn left over from each spread. Although it didn't seem to be one of the favorite designs among the tufters, judging by interviews with former workers, the peacock design was a big hit with tourists, outselling other designs by a ratio of 12-to-1.

In 1922, Catherine Evans married W. L. Whitener. Along with a number of other women, she continued to make good money in the spread business. During the 1920s, while some thought tufting was on the verge of becoming a major industry, most thought it was nothing more than a fad. Consequently, the women who tufted received little encouragement from their men to expand the business. They saw it as a hobby for the women and tended to ignore the possibilities. But as

more and more women entered the business and experienced success, the men began to take note and became involved in the process, first as haulers and then as developers of a more efficient production process.

Growth and Change

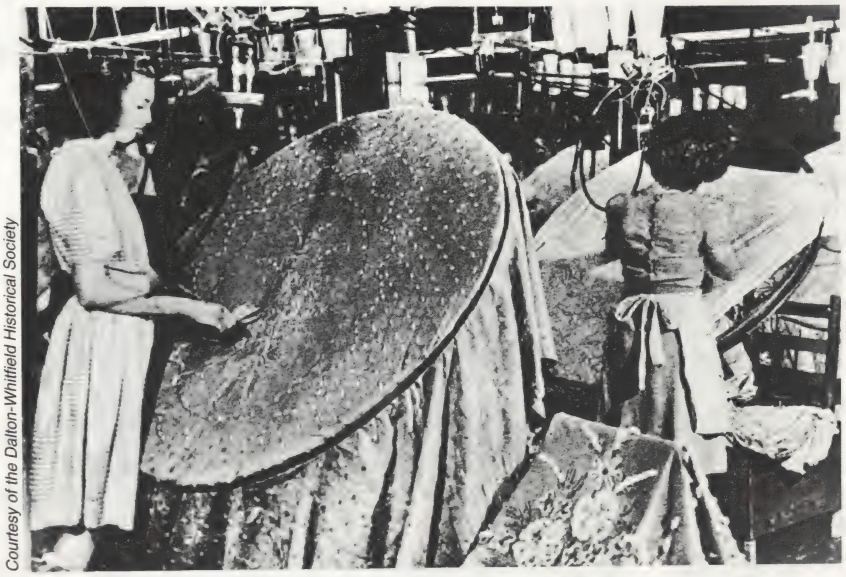
As the business continued to grow, there was a greater demand for tufters, and the haulers' routes began to cover more and more territory. Soon there were tufters throughout the four-state area of Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Alabama. Buyers pitted one company against another, forcing the companies to drive their prices down in an attempt to remain competitive. This in turn caused the piece rate to the tufters to decline. Many thought this would end the tufted spread fad.

Yet the industry survived. Historian Thomas Deaton is the author of the definitive *Bedspreads to Broadlooms,* the only book-length history of the tufted carpet industry and an important source for this article. According to Deaton, as farm prices fell during the Great Depression, it was the emerging bedspread industry that became the lifesaver of many of the farmers. Soon haulers were able to enlist entire farming families into tufting.

Some businesses created their sales through correspondence or by taking their spreads to both northern and southern department stores. The most famous of the marketing devices employed was the highly visible Bedspread Alley. The drying spreads flapping in the wind were better ads than the billboards that dotted the highways with promises of pecan logs and "Stuckey's - 5 Miles Ahead."

Other marketing was pure happenstance. In the 1939 movie "Gone With the Wind," two chenille bedspreads were used on the beds at Scarlett O'Hara's Tara. Cabin Crafts in Dalton had made the spreads at the special request of the film producers. The patterns were the Henry Clay and the Rosette. In 1946, recently ousted prime minister Winston Churchill was visiting Miami, Fla. While there, a friend gave him a Dalton tufted bedspread with a shell design.

Even as hand tufting was proving to be the salvation of many a farmer during the Depression, the Depression was bringing about changes to the industry that eventually sounded its death knell. On June 16, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the National Industrial Recovery Act as part of the New Deal. The act stipulated that every major industry should set minimum wages and maximum hours. It was immediately recognized that determining the proper pay for all the tufters who worked in their homes would be difficult. The new law also suggested an hourly rate of 32.5 cents and $13 for a 40-hour week, a huge jump from the 5 to 10 cents an hour commonly being paid hand tufters.



Courtesy of the Dalton-Whitfield Historical Society

Early mechanization in the chenille bedspread industry: needle punch machines and hoops.

These developments hastened an effort already under way to perfect and produce machinery to handle much of the work. By the early 1920s, it was already apparent that demand was outstripping the hand tufters' ability to supply the market. As a result, some ingenious fellow invented the single needle tufting machine. Many different single-needle machines came from converting existing machines; most were adapted from the old gooseneck Singer or Union Special sewing machines.

The late 1920s saw a variety of tufting machines appear in the bedspread industry. For example, the Carter brothers developed a single-needle tufting machine as early as 1926. A 1922 Georgia Institute of Technology graduate, Glenn Looper returned to his hometown of Dalton and to his father-in-law's bedspread company after working for a spell in Thomas Edison's New Jersey laboratories. He also developed a single-needle machine as well as a hand-held gun with which an operator could trace patterns with a type of blue chalk onto the sheeting for tufting. By 1928, Looper had invented yet another machine that could accommodate 16 needles. Soon there were machines capable of 24 or more parallel rows of tufting.

Machines and Mass Production

A country handicraft had been transformed into a mass-produced, machine-made product. By 1941, machines did all but 1 percent of the tufting of spreads. There were 90 firms making bedspreads in the Dalton area. Then, just as the embryonic industry was beginning to show signs of major growth, World War II came along, and the market virtually vanished in the wake of war materiel needs for the country. Plants were retooled to make tent canvas and uniforms.

After the war ended, however, the tufted goods

The drying spreads flapping in the wind were better ads than the billboards that dotted the highways with promises of pecan logs and "Stuckey's - 5 Miles Ahead."

industry rebounded — with a vengeance. The need for housing created by pent-up consumer demand and returning GIs created a need for floor coverings. The tufted carpet industry and the people of Dalton stood ready to cover the floors of a rapidly growing America.

By the early 1950s, machines that were capable of sewing goods 12 feet wide were constructed, giving birth to the modern broadloom or tufted carpet industry. The tufting industry had grown to a $133 million-a-year business nationwide by the end of 1951. This figure reflected combined sales of bedspreads, carpet, and rugs, with carpet accounting for only about $19 million of the total. At that time, 90 percent of the U.S. carpet production was woven, not tufted, and cotton was almost exclusively the fiber used in production.

In 1916, 10 bales of cotton were worth $1 million, and one out of every four bales of cotton grown in the U.S. was used in Dalton by the chenille industry. By 1946, 30,000 bales of cotton were consumed by the woven carpet, tufted carpet, and bedspread industries. Four years later, 500,000 bales were used as the demand for carpet increased, placing Dalton into the forefront of world carpet production.

But by the late 1950s, the figures had changed dramatically. Today tufted carpet accounts for a little over 90 percent of the carpet industry's production. The fibers more commonly used changed as well. By the 1990s, about 67 percent of all tufted carpet produced is nylon; polypropylene, polyester, and other synthetics are also widely used.

Of the approximately 200 companies manufacturing carpet located in 23 states in the U.S. in 1994, around 70 percent of these are currently located in the Dalton area, more than amply justifying its claim to the title of "Carpet Capital of the World." It is the capital of an industry that can claim approximately $15 billion in retail sales annually. And all of this came from one enterprising young Appalachian girl's initial investment of $1.25 nearly 100 years ago. N&T

Blair White is curator of the Reece Museum, part of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn.

Once

Down the street she strides
in a wartime photograph, a girl,
barely twenty, her dress all stripes,
smiling with the sun behind her.
Wading ankle-deep in shadows
she hurries back to work from the
lunch counter where she subtracted
today's menu from her week's
dwindling budget. She rents too —
from an old woman in an orange
wig who spends her mornings
propped in bed, phoning friends,
losing track of the money she's
spent in upkeep making the place
livable.

The girl in the picture
will catch a bus later
but now refuses a curbstone
photographer's offer of two prints
for half the value — a bargain
at any price but the one she
can afford. He reads her only
thought. Not to worry. He's
been in the Pacific, wounded,
and knows the cost of failing
to adjust the angle of exposure.
He'll give her one, keep the other
for himself if only she'll pass
this way tomorrow.

No matter that she'll mail
herself in stripes across the ocean
to a curly-haired man whose child
she later carries under her heart
like a stone. Enough satisfaction
in freezing her on the spot where
light explodes in pinwheels underfoot
and green awning bulges with just
enough shade to let her smile once
without squinting.

— Ed Francisco

Ed Francisco's collection entitled L(ie)fe Boat *won the 1994 poetry chapbook competition sponsored by Bluestone Press of Amherst, Mass. His poems have appeared in* The Southern Review, Kansas Quarterly, International Poetry Review, Negative Capability, *and* Mudfish, *among others.*

Reality Bytes

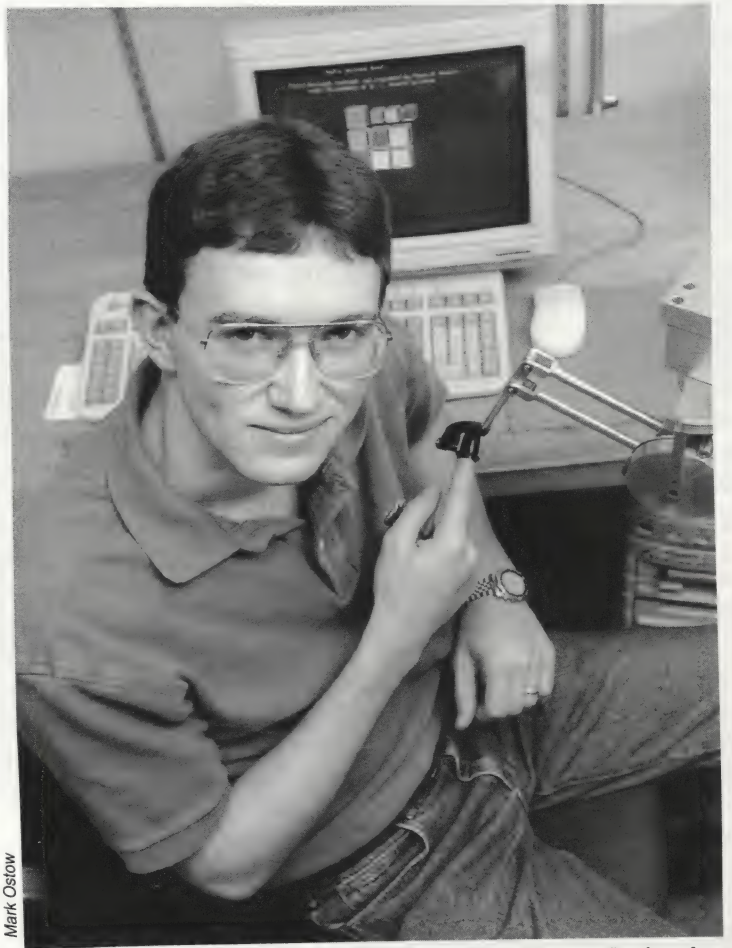
by Janet Hearne

With Thomas Massie's Phantom device, surgeons can practice new techniques on "virtual" patients before they try them out on the real thing.

Thomas Massie, a 24-year-old MIT graduate student from Vanceburg, Ky., has touched the future — literally. He has created a device called the Phantom which allows people to touch and manipulate images created by a computer.

The Phantom could be described as a virtual reality device, but Massie, who now lives in Cambridge, Mass., makes it clear that there is a difference between the popular concept of virtual reality and the Phantom.

"When most people talk about virtual reality, they think about donning this big helmet with displays in front of their eyes and then being immersed in an imaginary computer-generated world," Massie says. "The Phantom doesn't require you to be immersed in a virtual world. Rather it allows you to generate virtual objects in *your* world. You don't have to put on the head-mounted display to feel the virtual object. The Phantom sits on your desk; you just pick up your finger and place it in the Phantom's thimble. As you move your finger around, you feel it bump into objects. You can push them, move them around, feel how heavy they are. You can even squash them."



Mark Ostow

Thomas Massie, pictured here with the Phantom device, is the first recipient of the $30,000 Lemelson Student Prize for inventiveness. The prize is overseen by MIT.

Massie admits it is difficult for the layperson to understand just how the Phantom works. In basic terms, the Phantom has three motors that provide the energy to push back against your finger. As your finger moves in space, the software allows the Phantom's sensors to track its position. If the software program sees that your finger is trying to go through a virtual book, then the program exerts a force on your finger so you can't go through that object. Massie likens it to a "force field that's generated on the thimble."

According to Massie, the Phantom can elicit different sensations. "We can make things feel like they have texture. We can do corduroy. We can make things feel sticky like bubble gum; you'd have to pull really hard to pull your finger off of it. We can make things feel springy."

So far, medical training is the device's most important application. It can give nurses a chance to practice inserting needles into veins and sur-

"For the seventh grade science fair at school, I decided I was going to build a robot to clean my room and maybe mow the lawn."

geons a chance to try out certain surgical procedures. With the Phantom, medical personnel can practice on "virtual" patients rather than on living human beings.

Massie, the son of a nurse and a beer distributor, showed early signs of innovative genius. He began building robots in his bedroom when he was in seventh grade. His motives were not purely scientific, however.

"For the seventh grade science fair at school, I decided I was going to build a robot to clean my room and maybe mow the lawn," remembers Massie. "That's the good thing about being a kid. You don't know how much you don't know, and these things seem possible."

By the time the science fair rolled around, Massie had built only the robot arm — but the arm worked. It had switches that made the arm move; it had motors. Massie also figured out how to hook it up to his IBM personal computer. All of this was a dry run for ninth grade when he won second place in an international science fair.

Robot construction in those early days was limited by three factors: Massie lived in a small Kentucky town (population 2,000) located 45 minutes from the nearest Radio Shack; he couldn't drive; and his income was limited. "One thing you've got to realize in seventh grade is that if the part you need isn't in your house, you're not going to be able to use it," Massie points out. "You can't just hop in a car and get it. If you ride your bicycle to the hardware store, you can just get the necessities, like tape and glue. And then in seventh grade, you have maybe $1 of disposable income a week — maybe $20 after your birthday."

Massie learned to use what was at hand. His first robot arm consisted of parts from a rotating beer sign and motors from toys he had cadged from friends. "If a kid doesn't play with a toy," Massie explains, "he'll sell something that costs $10 for a quarter."

Growing up in Eastern Kentucky nurtured the inventor in him. First of all, Massie is grateful to his mother, both for her encouragement and for the fact that since she never made him clean up his room, he never had to throw anything away. He is also grateful for the education he received in Vanceburg's public schools. "When I came to MIT, I thought I was going to be behind because I'd gone to Eastern Kentucky public schools," Massie says. "You'd read: 'Eastern Kentucky, lowest-ranked schools in the nation . . . blah, blah, blah.' When I got to MIT, I found I was better prepared than most people here. So don't believe what they're saying."

It was at MIT that the Phantom was invented. Massie's professor, Kenneth Salisbury, whom he credits as co-inventor of the device, was talking with Massie about a possible project for his senior thesis for his degree in mechanical engineering. According to Massie, Salisbury said, "Wouldn't it be neat if I could pick my finger up off of the computer keyboard here and reach into the computer and feel what's on the screen?"

That was all Massie needed. As he describes it, he disappeared into the lab for a few months and figured out how to make the Phantom work.

In August of 1993, Massie formed SensAble Devices, a company created to manufacture and market the Phantom. Massie and his wife, Rhonda, also an MIT graduate in mechanical engineering, machined the first five devices themselves, cutting them out of aluminum with machine tools.

According to *Business Week*, the Phantom "was an instant sensation among robotics and computer control mavens." The device has won nationwide attention, including articles in both *Business Week* and the *Wall Street Journal.* Since 1993 the company has sold 40 of the Phantom devices at a cost of $19,500 each. Paul Allen, one of the founders of Microsoft, now has a new company called Interval Research. He bought four of the Phantoms. Others have been sold to General Electric, GTE, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, and to other universities. SensAble Devices' gross sales last year were $500,000. Massie expects to triple that figure by next year.

One of the things that makes the Phantom so attractive is its cost. The closest available technology sells for $200,000. Massie attributes the Phantom's affordability to the frugality he learned while growing up in Vanceburg. "Basically, it was the simplicity of the design which meant we could make it cheaper and make it work better," he says. "Growing up and trying to make things in Eastern Kentucky, you have a tendency to reduce things down to their basic parts."

Massie recently hired a president for his company. Bill Aulet, who attended Harvard and MIT, was an IBM executive for 12 years. With Aulet handling the administrative end of the business, Massie is now free to concentrate on the innovative side. He is working on a Phantom II device which will be even less expensive and easier to program. Down the road, he sees the possibility of a Phantom III designed for the individual computer. "Phantom III would be cheap enough that it could be on everybody's computer," Massie predicts.

Massie and his wife, who is expecting their first baby in December, also have plans to move back to Vanceburg.

"We're going to keep the business here for at least three years," Massie says. "But then my wife and I plan to return to Kentucky so our kid can go to the best schools in the world." N&T

Janet Hearne is completing a B.A. in English with a minor in journalism at East Tennessee State University and is student assistant for Now & Then. *She has had several articles published in* Now & Then *and other publications. She is the author of the book,* Only in California.

ETSU

News CASS

Winter 1996

Newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services • East Tennessee State University

Archives & Special Collections
A Division of Sherrod Library

CARROLL REECE MUSEUM

INSIDE:

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REECE UNVEILS LOST FRENCH MASTERWORK

The Reece Museum was afforded the opportunity to become the site of an unveiling of a lost masterwork by the French painter, Jean-Léon Gérôme. The painting, ***The End of the Seance***, was completed in 1886, at which time it entered a private collection and has not been seen publicly until now. Gérôme made his painting debut in 1846. Known as both a painter and sculptor, he was recognized for his equestrian statue of Napoleon in Paris.

The museum's good fortune in hosting the first public showing of the work is largely due to the generosity of **Mr. and Mrs. Kimball Sterling**. Kimball M. Sterling Inc., Auctioneers and Appraisers, was commissioned to offer at auction the masterwork along with other works including two rare Imperial Chinese seals from the Ming Dynasty. The Sterlings were gracious in also lending these seals for the events scheduled for the limited showing at the museum.

The loan of these items afforded the museum an opportunity to offer an evening of activities beginning with a reception hosted by ETSU President Dr. Roy Nicks and Ann Nicks at Shelbridge. The event functioned as a

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Photo by Jim Sledge, University Relations, 1995

"THE END OF THE SEANCE"

ARCHIVES HOMEPAGE OPEN FOR PUBLIC "READING"

East Tennessee State University's Archives and Special Collections announces that its newly created "homepage" is now available for public access. Those wishing to log on may do so on the World Wide Web by typing the following:

http://www.east-tenn-st.edu/~sfs1:archapp

The archives' "homepage" provides general information about the department, including hours of operation, available services, outreach programs which may be borrowed, duplication fees, and information regarding reference queries. In addition, as these are added, complete text finding aids to manuscript collections will be available for researchers to browse, along with a guide to audio-visual materials available for loan. Graphics such as campus and city maps and photographs from the archives' collection of historic images enhance the textual presentation.

For researchers from outside the Johnson City, Tennessee area, there is information regarding lodging, dining, and tourist attractions, as well as general information on the

continued on page 2

CENTER RECEIVES ARC GRANT FOR REGIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Planning for the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* received a boost with a $25,000 grant from the **Appalachian Regional Commission** and gifts from a variety of other government and corporate sources. The Advisory Board for the project has been selected and a recent planning meeting of leaders in Appalachian Studies tackled issues of content, organization, and selection of consulting editors.

The center will decide on a press to publish the encyclopedia early in 1996 and should have guidelines for contributors available in the spring.

If you are interested in contributing to the work of this project and have not yet sent us a letter of interest and a vita, please do so. The center is building a file of potential editors and contributors.

The center expresses its appreciation to the Appalachian Regional Commission and to all those who have given or pledged financial support for the project so far. ◆

NewsCASS, the joint newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Archives and Special Collections, and the B. Carroll Reece Museum, East Tennessee State University, is published three times a year. Center and Reece Museum members receive *NewsCASS* as part of the benefits of membership.

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Lisa Erwin, Secretary
Harold F. Stewart, Sr., Installation Supervisor
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NEW STAFF WELCOMED TO CENTER

Shari Brown has recently joined the center staff as grants coordinator with responsibility for developing and managing the center's multiple grant projects. Since her arrival in May, she has already been instrumental in helping the center raise almost $70,000. Previously, Ms. Brown worked for the engineering firm Tysinger, Hampton & Partners as director of planning/grants and as a city planner for the city of Kingsport. She holds a master's degree in geography and urban planning and a B.B.A. in economics, both from East Tennessee State University. "We're not sure how we managed without her," says center director Jean Speer.

The center also welcomes a new but very familiar face. Grammy Award-winning musician **Tim Stafford** has joined the staff as a research associate working on a grant project for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. At the International Bluegrass Music Association's September meeting in Owensboro, Ky., Stafford was elected vice chair of the board of directors.

This past fall, Stafford has served as an adjunct faculty member in the sociology department where he is teaching the Introduction to Appalachian Studies course and in the music deparment where he is offering both guitar and banjo instruction under the auspices of the Bluegrass and Country Music Program. The Bluegrass and Country Music program is jointly supported by the center and the ETSU Department of Music. ◆

Homepage, continued from page 10

region. Links with other "Homepages" will eventually be available.

Developed over the past year by archives' head **Norma Myers**, with assistance from staff of the archives, the Sherrod Library, and other university staff, the "homepage" makes more accessible the rich resources of the department's three units: Archives of Appalachia, University Archives, and Special Collections.

"The archives' homepage will help broaden our outreach not only to local researchers but also to researchers in other parts of this country and in other countries, making our collections more available," Myers said. It is hoped that eventually a researcher could log on to the archives' homepage, enter a search term, and find references throughout the entire collection of manuscript finding aids. Such access can only help enhance the research process. ◆

Photo by Jim Sledge, University Relations, 1995

left to right: **Dr. Jean Speer, center director, and Dr. Roy S. Nicks, ETSU president, announcing "Reece Museum Day."**

REECE MUSEUM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Dedicated in 1965 as a living memorial to Tennessee's First Congressional Representative B. Carroll Reece, the Reece Museum commemorated its 30th anniversary with a daylong celebration culminating in the unveiling of a once lost French masterwork, "The End of the Seance" by Jean-Léon Gérôme. Staff members of the museum and the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services hosted the event welcoming new members to FORM from the Freshman Advantage Program along with longtime friends from the university and community. Dr. Jean Speer, director of CASS, introduced Dr. Roy Nicks, president of ETSU, who read a proclamation declaring October 10, 1995, Reece Museum Day. ◆

REECE MUSEUM

NORTHEAST TENNESSEE TREASURES HIGHLIGHTED DURING BICENTENNIAL

Tennessee celebrates 200 years of statehood during 1996. In conjunction with the celebration, the Reece Museum has developed an exhibit calendar that gives focus to the state birthday and celebrates the arts and the history of the state and its people.

The accomplishments of the people of Northeast Tennessee are woven throughout the fabric of the nation's history. In collecting this history, the creative element of the people of the region is sometimes overlooked. Through the generous support of **Kimball M. Sterling** and his associate **Marcus King**, visitors to the Reece will be given an opportunity to learn much more of the creative endeavors of the peoples of the region in an exhibit titled "Appalachian Antiques: Treasures of Northeast Tennessee." Borrowed from a variety of area collections are quilts and other textiles, furniture, pottery, folk art, and paintings. Coming from private collections, most of the objects displayed have no previous public venues.

Using the Tennessee Bicentennial theme, and in celebration of Black History Month, the museum is again collaborating with Sterling, this time to borrow from his personal collection of **Alex Haley** memorabilia. Original artworks, first edition books, personal office items, and autographed items are included in this exhibit. ◆

Masterwork, continued from page 1

fund-raiser for the Friends of Reece Museum (FORM) art scholarship endowment. Participants purchased a "Piece of the Painting," matted pieces of a photographic enlargement of the painting, as a contribution to the scholarship and as mementos of being among the first to see the "lost" artwork not seen publicly for more than 100 years. At auction October 21, 1995, the painting sold for **$363,000**, including the buyer's fee, to a private buyer.

In addition to the art scholarship fund-raising event, the painting and seals were on display the following day for viewing and study at the museum. Students, faculty, staff, and members of the community were given a rare opportunity of sharing in this reemergence of a lost masterwork. ◆

DONATED MOONEY LETTERS ILLUMINATE MAJOR ETSU FIGURE

By Dr. Jack Mooney
ETSU, Department of Communication

Archives and Special Collections recently acquired a series of interesting letters written between 1931-46 by Jim Mooney, former ETSU baseball coach and veterans' adviser, to his older brother Charles.

Before coming to ETSU, Mooney played professional baseball, pitching for the New York Giants and St. Louis Cardinals. He was a member of the Cardinals' famous **"Gas House Gang,"** pitching in the 1934 World Series win over the Detroit Tigers.

During World War II, he was a lieutenant commander in the United States Navy, where he saw two tours of duty and commanded an L. S.T. (Landing Ship Tank). Mooney guided his ship through eight major landings, including the Philippines and Okinawa, being cited for "personal courage and leadership in performing duties and accomplishing designated assignments under regulated enemy air attack."

JIM MOONEY

Several of the letters in the collection were written at the time Mooney was beginning his professional baseball career. From Bridgeport, Conn., on August 8, 1931, he wrote that John McGraw, Giants' manager, had wired him to report to the Polo Grounds the next day. "At last my chance has come, and I am going to make the most of it," he wrote.

A New York sportswriter described the southpaw's first game: "An unknown young school master from a small Tennessee town walked out on the pitching mound at the Polo Grounds yesterday and pitched the Giants to a brilliant 2-1 victory over the heavy-hitting Pittsburgh Pirates...At 3:16 p.m., he was an obscure small-town boy. At 5:05 o'clock, he was a New York hero..."

Many of the letters cover Mooney's service in World War II. In one letter during training, he compared the experience to hunting in East Tennessee. "This business of leading a plane is fascinating. No wonder I never could kill doves. I did not lead them enough. ...Think of leading anything as much as a mile and expecting to hit it." By May 1943 he was finally at sea, "floating around from somewhere to somewhere else [he could not mention specific locations]" in waters "full of sharks, and I don't mean little fellows either." He later writes of having to kill a seven-foot shark.

In February 1943, after several months of training in New Orleans, Mooney found himself in San Francisco awaiting orders. Like many uniformed personnel, he found the uncertainty and waiting were starting to play on his patience. "I do not know how long I will be here, in fact I do not know what is going to happen next. We were sent out of New Orleans on a day's notice and the people were ... surprised to see us when we reported this morning. ...There are 50 of us and we are calling ourselves the lost battalion," he wrote.

As time progressed, the letters took on a more serious tone: "This duty of mine is not so bad when a fellow can be his own boss, but the darn uncertainty of the whole thing is not so good for the nerves. I just think of it as a baseball game, and I am doing the pitching with three men on base and nobody out with the home run hitter at the plate. Either I do or I don't. So there she is in a nutshell."

In April 1944, Mooney returned to the States for additional training and to pick up his new crew of the L.S.T. 555 in Chicago. Writing from there to his brother back home, he expressed his disappointment at not being able to visit family as expected. "I came into this war to fight the enemy and that is what I desire to do, but ever since I have been attached to the amphibians, about all I have done is fight for my own rights against what are supposed to be my friends. I did manage to get half of my crew a seven-day leave, but I do not expect the other half of us will get much if any at all. I will not leave myself until I can do all I can for my men. They come first with me."

Mooney was soon back in the Pacific, but he could not write to his brother in detail about the action he was seeing there. He implied important events were happening by contrasting them to the baseball season. In August 1944 he wrote, "Spring training is just about

continued on page 5

SELECTED RECENT ACQUISITIONS & GIFTS

JAMES AGEE FILM PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHS
1885-1960. 1 linear ft.
Consists of two file folders of lists identifying prints and negatives; 22 glass negatives; 300 film negatives; 160 contact prints. Depicted are images of Johnson City and Jonesborough, Tenn., in the late 19th-early 20th centuries; Washington College, the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad, and East Tennessee State Normal School (ETSU) in the early 20th century; and agriculture in the region in the 1930s. Donated by Dale Moore and Ross Spears, Johnson City, Tenn.

APPY LEAGUE LOG BOOK TAPES
1995. 2 audio cassettes.
Consists of two audio cassette recordings of programs on baseball's Appalachian League presented by Tom Burns and aired on WETS-FM, ETSU, in the summer of 1995. Donated by Tom Burns, Kingsport, Tenn.

JOE BETHANCOURT COLLECTION
1994-95. 4 items.
Consists of three audio cassettes of Bethancourt playing banjo music and one 3.5" computer disk containing information on White Tree Productions. Publicity photographs are also included. Donated by Joe Bethancourt, Phoenix, Ariz.

BURTON-MANNING COLLECTION
1960s-70s. 2 linear ft. Addition.
Consists of 11 boxes of indexes to song titles and artists in the collection, bibliographic references to folk songs and folklore, and a folder explaining how the indexes are set up. Donated by Dr. Thomas Burton, Dept. of English, ETSU.

LEE R. HERNDON CHAPTER, TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION
1994-95. 1 folder. Additions.
Consists of one file folder of materials related to the chapter's 50th anniversary (1994-95), including banquet program, checklists of birds of Northeast Tennessee, and clippings on birds; minutes of chapter meetings; and a booklet, "Birds of the Nashville Area." Donated by Beth Hogan, Sherrod Library, ETSU, Charles Moore, CASS, ETSU, and Martha Dillenbeck, Johnson City, Tenn.

MARY HARDIN MCCOWN COLLECTION
1940-71. 1.5 linear ft. Additions.
Consists of one file folder of materials related to the Johnson City Kiwanis Club (clippings, pamphlets, booklets, correspondence, 1951-71); materials related to McCown's work as a census enumerator, genealogical materials, and miscellaneous cards and pamphlets (1940-70); correspondence, legal documents, photographs, clippings, and miscellaneous printed matter on the East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad and Cranberry Iron Works (1866-1971); clippings, correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia on Johnson City, Tenn., and Cranberry, N. C. (1955-80). Donated by Mildred Kozsuch, Jonesborough, Tenn.

WILLIAM HENLEY NELSON FAMILY PAPERS
1888-1987. .25 linear ft. Addition.
Consists of one account book kept by Nelson, 1888-89; photographs of the Nelson family (19th-early 20th centuries); and miscellaneous materials such as clippings and memorial cards. Donated by William Nelson and Ruth St. John, Roan Mountain, Tenn.

ORAL HISTORY OF THE TREE STREETS COLLECTIONS
1995. .25 linear ft.
Consists of seven audio cassettes of interviews conducted in the summer of 1995 by Governor's School students with persons living in the "Tree Streets" neighborhood of Johnson City, Tenn. Includes tape logs and clippings. Donated by Katie Doman, Johnson City, Tenn.

OTHER DONATIONS
Archives and Special Collections would like to thank the following for donations and assistance to the department: Howard and Juanita Campbell and Dr. Jack Mooney. ◆

Mooney, continued from page 4

over and it will not be long until the season opener. Of course the game has been in progress for some time, with other teams taking part. However, we are using a new team in this particular game, and the umpire is sitting on His throne up in Heaven and I know he will deal out justice in his decisions."

On September 25, 1945, Mooney reached his objective. A typhoon had cast L.S.T. 555 on the beach "with holes in her bottom...This was the fourth typhoon for us, but the others were nothing compared to this one...I hit Japan with a bang."

In January 1946 Jim Mooney returned to East Tennessee and later that year assumed the duties of teacher, coach and veterans' adviser for which he is remembered at ETSU. Now, with the donation of these letters, his earlier careers as a ballplayer and sailor can also be appreciated. ◆

Jim Mooney photograph courtesy of Dr. Jack Mooney.

APPALACHIAN-SCOTTISH STUDIES

*This is the first installment of a regular feature by **Stevan Jackson** on the Appalachian-Scottish Studies program. A doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee in cultural anthropology, Jackson has worked with the program's founder, Dr. Thomas Burton, ever since its inception. With Burton's retirement after the 1995 trip to Scotland and Ireland, Jackson has assumed the post of Appalachian-Scottish Studies director.*

The Appalachian-Scottish Studies program (ASSP) is pleased to become a regular part of the center newsletter, *NewsCASS*. We hope to share the happenings of this exciting program with you in each issue. To begin with, the program has had a productive, exciting, and transitional year.

It has been productive in that we have introduced several innovations into the program. Last spring, ASSP sponsored a Native American Powwow, bringing in Native Americans to discuss and demonstrate numerous aspects of their culture. The audience of nearly 300 was treated to traditional Native American storytelling, dancing, singing, flute playing, tanning, weaving, flint napping, pipe making, and much more. The highlight of the show was a hoop dancer who gave a riveting performance of this intricate art form. Several different tribal groups, such as the Comanche, Apache, Navajo, and Cherokee, were represented.

The center's own Penelope Lane discussed the relationship between the Cherokee and the Scotch-Irish settlers of Appalachia.

Also as part of this productive year, ASSP engaged in several fund-raising activities, including running a concession booth at an ETSU football game and making available a newly designed ASSP T-shirt, some of which are still available.

It has been an exciting year because this was the year for our biennial trek to Scotland, Appalachia's ancestral soulmate. A new feature was added this year by scheduling five days in Northern Ireland, thus filling in a gap in the ASSP course by studying firsthand the Irish part of our Scotch-Irish heritage. The field trips through Northern Ireland were an excellent addition to the regular field trips in Scotland.

And lastly, it has been a transitional year. With the retirement of Dr. Thomas Burton, ASSP's architect and inspiration, I have taken on the job of director. There is no way to improve upon the foundation that Dr. Burton has established for this program. The best I can hope for is to build upon that foundation a program that will go forward and extend beyond the boundaries that have been set for us by Dr. Burton.

If you have any specific questions about the ASSP, contact Stevan Jackson at 423-929-5348, write to the Appalachian-Scottish Studies Program, Box 70556, ETSU, Johnson City TN 37614, or e-mail jackson@etsuvax.east-tenn-st.edu. ◆

Appalachia Now & Then: New Radio Series Launched

The Center for Appalachian Studies has launched a pilot project of radio spots entitled *Appalachia Now & Then,* which has been aired on national public radio stations WETS-FM in Johnson City, Tenn., and WMMT-FM in Whitesburg, Ky.

Co-produced by Tim Stafford and *Now & Then* editor Jane Harris Woodside, *Appalachia Now & Then* is a collection of three-minute features about Appalachian life. The first series was developed out of material in the spring issue of *Now & Then* and concentrated on the environment and Appalachia. Included was an interview excerpt with **Don Barger**, southeast regional director with the National Parks & Conservation Association, about the role of government in environmental issues; poet **Rita Quillen** reading and speaking about "The Cabin at Devil's Fork"; an excerpt from writer **Jim Minick's** essay, "Groundhog"; and music editor **Ed Snodderly's** thoughts about **Jean Ritchie's** song, "Black Waters." Production is currently under way for additional spots based on material in *Now & Then's* summer music issue.

If you know of additional national public radio stations in your area which might be interested in receiving these spots, please contact Jane Woodside at 423-929-5348. ◆

REECE MUSEUM

TENNESSEE MUSEUMS GROUP SETS TRI-CITIES VISIT FOR 1996 MEETING

The Reece Museum and its colleagues within the Northeast Tennessee museum community will host the bicentennial edition of the **Tennessee Association of Museums** annual meeting, March 13-15, 1996.

The conference theme is disaster and hazard preparedness. The conference will offer sessions of interest to art, historic, and scientific institutions—large or small. Daytime sessions will be led by museum professionals from across the state and throughout the region; evening events will include dinner at the Reece Museum, tours of Tusculum College and Greeneville, storytelling in Jonesborough, and visits to Tipton-Haynes and Rocky Mount. ◆

Photo by Larry Smith, University Relations, 1995

Legendary bluegrass musician Bill Monroe (right) scans the *Now & Then* music issue as songwriting contest winners Carl Rutherford (left) and Dr. Gene Norton (center) look on. Rutherford won first place in the folk category, and Norton took top honors in the country category.

Now & Then
SONGWRITING CONTEST

BLUEGRASS/COUNTRY MUSIC PROGRAM

The past few months have been rewarding ones for past and current students in ETSU's bluegrass and country music program. Just a few of the highlights include:

◆ ETSU alumni **Barry Bales**, **Adam Steffey**, and **Tim Stafford** were featured on Alison Krauss's Rounder album, *Now That I've Found You: A Collection*. The album has sold well over a million copies, a record for a bluegrass artist.

◆ ETSU alumnus and BNA recording artist **Kenny Chesney's** new release, *Fall In Love*, has placed in the top five on the Billboard Country Music Charts. This fall, he toured with the group Alabama.

◆ Alumnus **Tim Stafford's** new band, Blue Highway, completed an 8,500-mile, cross-country tour to promote its new Rebel album entitled (appropriately) *It's a Long, Long Road*. The album's title song was composed by bluegrass and country music director Jack Tottle, who also wrote the album's liner notes. In October, the album reached the #3 slot on *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine's listing of the top 15 albums nationally.

◆ Rounder records announces the signing of ETSU alumna **Beth Stevens**.

◆ **Amanda Mathis**, student director of one of four ETSU bluegrass bands, spent her summer vacation playing with the all-female bluegrass/country/gospel band, the Wildwood Girls. The Wildwood Girls played at Dollywood, at numerous festivals throughout the country, and completed a two-week USO tour in Portugal and Italy.

◆ Bluegrass and country music program director **Jack Tottle** produced an all-ETSU concert at Bristol's Paramount Center for the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, a Bristol-based regional organization dedicated to calling attention to this area's rich musical heritage. Featured artists were Blue Highway, the Stevens Family, and the ETSU Bluegrass Band. ◆

If you have specific questions regarding the Bluegrass and Country Music program at ETSU, please contact its director, Jack Tottle, at (423)929-5348 or (423)929-0339 or write Tottle at Box 70556, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 37614-0556.

ARCHIVES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT DISCOVERS HIDDEN HEROINES IN EAST TENNESSEE

The archives' **Dr. Marie Tedesco** and center director **Dr. Jean Speer** are serving as advisors for an interesting oral history project titled "Hidden Heroines of Northeast Tennessee," which aims to uncover the history of the average woman or "everywoman" who made significant, but underappreciated, contributions to the heritage of Northeast Tennessee. The project is being sponsored by the Town of Jonesborough and funded by the Tennessee Humanities Council.

Tedesco is working with project director **Linda Poland**, the Town of Jonesborough's tour guide; alternate director **Pam Sweebe**, director of the Jonesborough-Washington County History Museum; and **Bill Storie**, curator of the museum, in providing expertise in women's history, historical background, and oral history methodology to the project. Speer conducted two oral history training workshops and will help evaluate materials developed for the project. Other organizations providing assistance are the National Storytelling Association, the ETSU Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Milligan College, and the Greater Kingsport Area Art Council.

Researchers will gather oral histories of women in the project counties of Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington. These oral histories will tell not only of the lives of the women interviewed but also of the oral traditions of their ancestors and living relatives. The histories will be archived at the Jonesborough-Washington County History Museum and at Archives and Special Collections, East Tennessee State University. The tapes and tape transcripts will provide raw material indispensable to the study of Northeast Tennessee.

The project intends to appeal not only to scholars but also to the general public, educators, and school children. An oral history classroom curriculum will be designed to create a link to the past and to bridge generations by encouraging children to learn their personal histories by talking to their older relatives. Research findings, including tape transcripts, will be used by playwright **Jo Carson** to develop a dramatic presentation on the contributions of a sampling of the women. The play will be performed for the general public and will be made available to area schools.

The "Hidden Heroines" project began in December of 1994 and will culminate in the premiere of the dramatic presentation in March 1996. Anyone with experience and interest in oral history projects or with knowledge of women important in the region should contact Linda Poland or Pam Sweebe at the Town of Jonesborough Visitors Center, (423)753-1010. ◆

CENTER STAFF MEMBERS APPOINTED TO CONSORTIUM

ETSU President Dr. Roy S. Nicks recently announced the appointment of several CASS staff as representatives to the **Appalachian Consortium**. The appointments are for three years.

Serving on the consortium board of directors are Dr. Jean Speer, center director, and Norma Myers, head, Archives and Special Collections. Speer is also serving on the Administrative Committee, with Myers serving on the Regional Collections Committee.

Other committee appointments are as follows: Margaret Carr and Blair White, Reece Museum, board alternates and Museum Committee; Marie Tedesco, Archives and Special Collections, Publications Committee; Ned Irwin, Archives and Special Collections, Regional Collections Committee; Charles Moore and Penelope Lane, Center staff, Publications Committee; Stevan Jackson, Appalachian-Scottish Studies Program, Folklife Committee. In addition, Sherrod Library faculty members Dr. Jean Flanigan and Patrick Dunn are serving on the Regional Collections Committee, with Annis Evans serving on the Folklife Committee. Some 60 other ETSU faculty and staff also serve on consortium committees.

The Appalachian Consortium is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia. The organization seeks to assist in solving current regional problems, to improve the quality of life in the area, both now and in the future, and to raise the pride of the Appalachian people in their traditions and in the region in which they live. The consortium meets three times a year. ETSU will host the February 2, 1996 meeting. ◆

Memberships in the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

MEMBERSHIPS GIVE YOU NOW & THEN AND MUCH MORE

Membership in the center provides public recognition of your generosity and your support for our work in the Appalachian region. No matter what size the investment, a contribution to the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services through membership brings important returns. Your benefits of membership are:

- Members receive three issues of the center's magazine, ***Now & Then***, to keep you abreast of Appalachian issues and the best in Appalachian writing and photography.
- Members receive the center's newsletter, ***NewsCASS***, three times a year. Members are publicly acknowledged in the newsletter once each year.
- Members receive special member rates and discounts on books, recordings, and other publications or productions, study tours, study abroad, conferences, and programs.

In addition, your membership provides the center with these benefits:

- Memberships help us conduct the center's multiple programs and projects in teaching, research, and service in the Appalachian region.
- Members have opportunities for participating in center projects as volunteers.

Center Membership/*Now & Then*

❑ **CASS Student Associates** (for undergraduate and graduate students)	**$10**	
❑ **CASS Friends**	**$15**	
❑ **CASS Institutional Affiliate** (libraries, etc.) ___ Payment enclosed ____ Please bill	**$20**	
❑ **CASS Contributors**	**$25**	
❑ **CASS Associates**	**$50**	
❑ **CASS Partners**	**$100**	
❑ **CASS Patrons**	**$250**	or more
❑ **CASS Corporate Partners**	**$500**	or more

Donations in excess of $15 may be tax-deductible.

Friends of the center are also encouraged to support specific programs with special funds already established for them.

YES! I'd like to make an additional contribution of $_____ to:

- ❑ Appalachian Studies Curriculum
- ❑ Appalachian-Scottish Studies Program
- ❑ Country and Bluegrass Music Program

Other ways to contribute to the center:

Scholarships • Fellowships • Memorials & Honor Gifts • Gift Memberships • In-kind and Special Gifts • Employee Matching Gifts • Bequests by Will • Retirement Plans and IRAs • Gifts of Stocks • Gifts of Archival Value, Art, Historical Artifacts

Thank you for your support. Make checks payable to ETSU/CASS and send to CASS, ETSU Box 70556, Johnson City, TN 37614-0556.

Archives and Special Collections

Members are invited to make donations of materials having historical and cultural significance for Southern Appalachia and its people, as well as financial contributions to the Archives of Appalachia Fund and to the Tom Daniels Memorial Fund (for archives media projects). For further information, phone (423)929-4338 or write Archives and Special Collections, at the adress below.

- ❑ Archives of Appalachia Fund Amount _____
- ❑ Tom Daniels Memorial Fund Amount _____

Please make checks payable to the specific fund named and mail to Archives and Special Collections, ETSU Box 70665, Johnson City, TN 37614-0665.

Friends of the Reece Museum (FORM)

Members receive the center newsletter, and receive member rates on programs, discovery tours, and other museum activities. For futher information, please call (423)929-4392.

❑ FORM Student	$5.00	
❑ FORM Individual	$15	
❑ FORM Family	$25	
❑ FORM Supporting	$50	
❑ FORM Sustaining	$250	
❑ FORM Corporate	$500	or more

Please make checks payable to FORM and mail to Reece Museum, ETSU Box 70660, Johnson City, TN 37614-0660.

Please fill out the information below for *all* memberships or donations and send to appropriate address:

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GUIDE TO ARCHIVE AUDIO-VISUAL COLLECTIONS AVAILABLE

Archives and Special Collections' ***A Guide to Audio-Visual Collections***, a major revision and updating of the department's 1981 guide to research collections composed mainly of audio and/or video recordings, is now available to researchers.

The 1981 guide was compiled at a time when the archives was relatively new and had relatively few audio-visual collections. Only four collections were included. In the nearly 15 years since its publication, the extent and nature of the archives' holdings has greatly expanded. The new guide covers 18 collections and nearly 2,000 recordings.

Collections included in the guide are Appalachian Preaching Mission, Appalachian-Scottish Studies, Barnicle-Cadle, Richard Blaustein, Broadside Television, Inc., Thomas Burton, Burton-Headley, Burton-Manning, Cynthia Cornwell, Charles R. Gunter, Jr., Barbara McDermitt, David Larry Nave, Old Time Dance Conference, Southern Songbirds, Jack Tottle, WCYB Radio, WHCB Homecoming '86, WSJK-TV.

In addition, the department's nine outreach program videotapes on selected Appalachian topics are included. The tapes cover the following topics: coal mining, country music in the Tri-Cities, Embreeville-Bumpass Cove, quilting, logging camp life, preserving historic structures, the history of Johnson City, Tenn., railroads, and Pat Alderman, local historian and author.

Many of the recordings listed in the guide are available for loan as well as for use in the archives. There is no loan charge for tapes picked up at the archives. There is a charge of $3 per audio recording and $5 per video recording to borrow tapes by mail, which covers the cost of postage and handling. Certain collections and certain tapes within collections are restricted to use in the archives viewing room.

The guide is available in the archives' reading room and may also be purchased for $10 per copy (add $1.50 if mailed).◆

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS EAST TENNESSEE CITY?

(answer in next newsletter)

NEXT *NOW & THEN* FOCUSES ON APPALACHIAN VISIONS

Now & Then, the Appalachian magazine published by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at ETSU, is accepting fiction, poetry, essays, interviews, non-fiction articles, and photography about Appalachian life for the next two issues.

Appalachian Visions will be the focus of the Summer 1996 issue, with a **March 1** deadline. After having talked about how to preserve Appalachia's past and present history and culture in the spring Conserving Appalachia issue, **Appalachian Visions** invites writers to peer into their crystal balls and tackle questions such as: What will Appalachia look like in the future? If I had my way, what would I change about the region? In conjunction with this issue, the center and *Now & Then* will be sponsoring the **Appalachian Visions Essay Contest**. See the notice on this page for more details.

In the fall of 1996, the center will publish the issue you've all been waiting for, **Religion in Appalachia**. This issue will examine all of the various ways religion has shaped Appalachia, and Appalachia has shaped religion. We are looking for thoughtful articles and interviews about religion. Please remember that as a public institution, we cannot publish tracts attempting to convert others. The deadline for this issue will be **July 1, 1996**.

For more information, or to obtain writers' guidelines, write *Now & Then*, CASS/ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City, TN 37614-0556. ◆

ESSAY CONTEST WILL STUDY REGION'S FUTURE

The Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and *Now & Then* announce a 1996 **Appalachian Visions Essay Contest**. With a new millennium just around the corner, the center invites Appalachians to submit a 2,000- to 2,500-word essay answering the question, "What is your vision for the future of Appalachia?" You must be a center member to enter. The winning writer will receive $500, and the essay will be published in the Summer 1996 issue of *Now & Then*. All submissions must be postmarked no later than Friday, March 15, 1996. In order to receive membership information and complete contest guidelines, write Appalachian Visions Contest, CASS/ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614. ◆

Special Offer to Center Members

Members of the Center for Appalachian Studies & Services are entitled to a 20 percent discount off the $59.95 list price for *Communities in Motion,* co-edited by Susan Eike Spalding and center assistant director Jane Harris Woodside. For the very first time, *Communities* offers essays and interviews about vernacular dance and its relationship to Appalachian communities. Simply send in the order form that appears below to the Greenwood Press address. ◆

Place your credit card order TOLL-FREE, 24 hours-a-day: 1-800-225-5800

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News CASS

Newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services / East Tennessee State University

Archives & Special Collections
A Division of Sherrod Library

CARROLL REECE MUSEUM

Center: 423-929-5348 FAX: 423-929-6340
Archives: 423-929-4338 Box 70665
Reece Museum: 423-929-4392 Box 70660

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MT. MITCHELL HIKING DIARY PUBLISHED

The second of the *In the Spirit of Adventure* series of four hiking diaries being published from the holdings of East Tennessee State University's Archives and Special Collections is now available to readers. Written by Johnson City architect **D. R. Beeson, Sr.** (1881-1983), the diary with photographs describes a hike Beeson shared with ETSU Dean C. Hodge Mathes to the summit of Mount Mitchell in North Carolina in 1915.

Edited by Norma Myers and Ned Irwin of the archives, in conjunction with publisher Charles Maynard of Sevierville, Tenn., the volume is priced at $12.95 (hardback) and $7.95 (paperback) and may be ordered from **Panther Press**, P. O. Box 636, Seymour, TN 37865. Diaries of hikes to Grandfather Mountain and Table Rock Mountain in North Carolina are forthcoming.◆

CENTER FOR Appalachian STUDIES AND SERVICES

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services
East Tennessee State University
Box 70556
Johnson City TN 37614-0556

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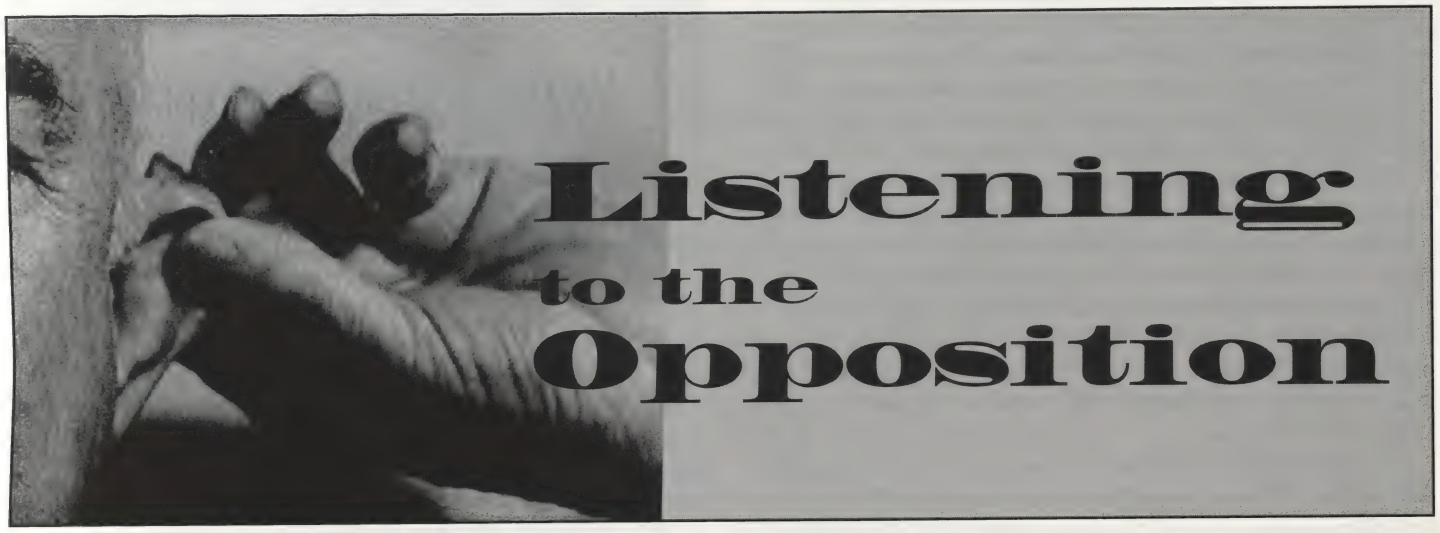

Listening to the Opposition

Activists find a civil way to resolve conflicts.

by Frances O'Roark Dowell

Tune into talk radio any day of the week, and the flood of angry voices may cause you to wonder if our national motto shouldn't be: "We have met the enemy — and he's the other guy."

On the major issues, virtually everyone has taken a side and will happily tell you why it's the right one. Others let t-shirts, bumper stickers, and buttons do their talking for them. With everyone talking past each other, it's hard not to be a little cynical when politicians speak in sincere tones about finding common ground between dissenting points of view. Yet in the face of such obstacles, one group has introduced a revolutionary idea for getting people actually to consider the other guy's side of the story.

They call it listening.

A model for grassroots activists working for change in their communities, the Listening Project is a program developed by the Burnsville, N.C.-based Rural Southern Voice for Peace (RSVP). RSVP is a nonprofit organization started by Herb Walters in 1981; it provides organizing assistance and networking opportunities primarily for rural groups in the southeastern United States. Its mission is to create social change, not by doing battle with enemies, but by building bridges between opposing camps. RSVP, which consists of a board of directors and a small support staff, has seen the Listening Project grow from a simple idea to a grassroots movement. In fact, many listening projects throughout the country are now done independently of RSVP.

Since its start in 1985, dozens of groups, from social-change activists to city governments, have used the Listening Project model as a tool to reach their neighbors. Using the model developed by Herb Walters, groups are trained to do something which is simple but rare: to sit down and listen to people who, by habit or tradition, disagree with them. At the core of the Listening Project's philosophy is the belief that empathy is essential for reducing conflict.

Projects have ranged from efforts to get women in the North Carolina mountains to breast-feed their babies to asking people on both sides of the bars in West Virginia's criminal justice system for ideas on crime prevention. Over the past ten years, projects have also been conducted in South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Florida, as well as states beyond the Southeast, including Oregon, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

In the early 1990s, Walters ventured as far as Bosnia, where he worked with the Pancevo Peace Movement, a group comprised mostly of Serbs who opposed the actions of their government. Peace Movement members interviewed Serbs and Muslims near the town of Pancevo in an effort to begin a conversation about peace.

Walters, who now works as a private consultant to groups interested in using the Listening Project model, grew up as an army brat in a conservative Southern family. He has a long history as a social activist, beginning with his opposition to the Vietnam War.

He initiated the first Listening Project when he approached a group of Christian activists protesting the building of nuclear submarines in St. Marys, Ga. The group was employing traditional protest tactics, which caused local residents to see its members as outside agitators and little else. Walters encouraged the activists to put down their picket signs and try a radically different tactic. Armed only with questions, group members approached everyone, from housewives and bus drivers to the men and women building the subs, to ask what *they* thought about nuclear warfare.

Bill Hartsock, RSVP's current field director and Walters' successor, says the program is unique. In these projects, the "listeners" are certainly activists with an agenda, but they choose the strategy of listening to the other side rather than staging confrontation. "It's a process where you actually listen to people you might not want to listen to," he explains. "They don't have Ph.D.s tacked to their names. They're sitting there in their t-shirts, eating their lunch, and they really have something to say."

In a typical listening project, teams of two fieldworkers interview people in their homes, using a list of survey questions developed in group planning sessions. One person records the answers, which will later be tabulated with the results of other interviews. Ultimately, the group will use the information garnered from their interviews to determine what their course of action will be in that particular community.

Although the subjects of the surveys differ from project to project, the questions are always designed to get beyond yes-and-no answers. As Hartsock is quick to point out, a listening project isn't a Gallup poll. It's not about gathering statistics, but rather about opening up a dialogue.

On a warm, sunny Saturday in late September, Hartsock and Walters find themselves in an accounting classroom on the campus of Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, N.C., working with a group interested in sustainable agriculture. Mountain Partners in Agriculture, a coalition of organic farmers and growers from Madison County and northern Buncombe County in North Carolina, wants to encourage local farmers to forgo the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It is one of four groups that make up Partners in Agriculture, a statewide project funded by the Michigan-based Kellogg Foundation, in hopes of fostering farming practices that minimize damage to the environment. Mountain Partners members hope their listening project will not only help them to determine the best methods for bringing sustainable agriculture practices into their community but will also establish a bond of trust and understanding between themselves and their neighbors.

"It's a real leap of faith to sit down with a stranger and try to establish rapport," Hartsock says at the beginning of the training workshop. Walters believes making that leap is not only possible, but it is absolutely necessary in order to deal with problems such as racism, poverty, and toxic waste and other environmental hazards. It is Walters' view that when people are asked questions that don't attempt to shame them or discredit their way of life, they often begin to examine long-held beliefs about difficult issues.

"You never know how you will affect someone when you talk to them," Walters says. In a Louisiana project, Walters interviewed a young man who told him bluntly that he thought Abraham Lincoln should have sent all African Americans back to Africa. Furthermore, he was firmly convinced that African Americans were not as intellectually developed as whites. By the interview's end, however, the man was pointing to economic conditions and the lack of educational opportunities as the source of many problems in African American communities.

It's a real leap of faith to sit down with a stranger and try to establish rapport.

That very first listening project conducted by the anti-nuclear war protesters in St. Marys, Ga., wasn't ultimately successful because the group never went on to use what they learned from their neighbors to develop a plan of action. The Asheville Diversity in Religion project, a recent effort in Asheville, N.C., that focused on the issue of homosexuality in the church community, had a more positive outcome. After being presented with the results of the yearlong project, a group of ministers formed an interfaith alliance to promote the acceptance of gays in local congregations.

Kim Tibbals

Bill Hartsock.

North Carolina's Mountain Partners project has greater potential for positive results, according to Walters, because the group plans to use the survey's findings for a specific purpose: the development of a program for sustainable agriculture that will involve the entire community.

After everyone has settled into their seats and introductions have been made, Walters and Hartsock begin the business of helping Mountain Partners members edit a survey which had been drafted by the group's steering committee. In the process, the RSVP organizers help them learn techniques for conducting successful interviews.

In a typical session, group members will spend one or two days with a Listening Project trainer who will lead them through a series of role-playing and brainstorming exercises to familiarize them with the joys and frustrations of interviewing. The trainer also helps the group work out the logistics of a project: How many interviews will be conducted; where and with whom; as well as how the results will be tabulated and how they will be

Courtesy of RSVP

Herb Walters.

used. Overall, the trainer's goal is to enable a group to conduct a listening project by itself. RSVP's involvement usually ends after the training session is over.

The cost of a training session varies, depending on a group's resources and the travel and time put in by a trainer. The average fee for an RSVP training session is $1,250, the money going to pay for the trainer's travel, time, and the use of RSVP's computers and fax machine. Hartsock makes it clear, however, that RSVP never turns a group down because its funds are limited. If a group's project has merit, RSVP will work with the group to make the training session possible. Walters, who now often leads training workshops independently of RSVP, uses the same criteria when determining fees.

At the beginning of the session, Walters tells the group, "We're trying to create an atmosphere where we're sitting down with a neighbor and using the survey as a guide. We want to create an atmosphere where a person feels safe."

With this in mind, group members read each question out loud, adding to it, deleting phrases, and fine-tuning sentences. There is a shared concern that some of the questions sound leading or judgmental. Question number 23, for instance, asks farmers if they would like to receive help "in learning other effective growing practices."

Pat O'Conner, a thoughtful Mountain Partners member with a full white beard, thinks the question might be loaded. "It's almost as if we're trying to elicit something from these people that we want to hear," he says.

Walters sits back in his seat and pays keen attention to the discussion. A veteran of these training sessions, Walters' approach is casual and non-authoritarian. He's not convinced that having an agenda is such a terrible thing, just as long as the interviewers are honest with the people they're interviewing about their goals. He is eventually moved, however, to tell the group that he thinks it is being a little overly sensitive. After all, he points out, this project is not as controversial as most.

"Usually in listening projects, we're dealing with serious community conflict, asking questions that might really challenge the way the other person thinks," Walters tells the group. This project, he says will be about asking people questions and, ideally, getting them to reflect on their farming practices, a subject that is not nearly as emotionally charged as race relations or a community's drug problems. Walters and Hartsock emphasize the importance of building trust with the people being interviewed by focusing on the humanity of the individual. "Even if a person is putting down something very dear to you, give them space to express it," Walters instructs the group. He underscores the role of affirmation in the interviewing process, saying that interviewers should take every opportunity to let people know their views are honored and respected.

It is the Listening Project's strong nonconfrontational aspect that drew Bill Hartsock to it like "a moth to a flame," he says. The son of a Virginia coal miner, Hartsock has long been involved with direct action activism, a more in-your-face approach to social change than the average listening project. As he intersperses anecdotes about past projects with quotes from St. Paul, it is clear that Hartsock sees the Listening Project as a spiritual endeavor.

"Probably one of the common threads running through every listening project is a core of faith," Hartsock says. He describes the interviewing process as "probing one's spirit: 'I know my position and am faithful to that. I'll help you re-examine your thinking, and I'll re-examine mine.'"

After a lunch of pizza served on napkins, Hartsock and Walters lead the group in a brainstorming exercise which poses the hypothetical response to one of the survey's questions: "I don't see what's wrong with using chemicals since they help us to have a good crop." What are some of the positive interpretations of this answer, Hartsock wants to know.

The biggest problem you have in interviewing is people not wanting you to leave.

"They're providing for their family," comes one response. Other possibilities are listed on the chalkboard: Farming with chemicals is easier. The government says chemicals are safe. The poor quality of the land may necessitate the use of chemicals.

When given the opportunity to come up with negative interpretations of the posed response, group members are initially shy about making any observations. Someone finally jokes, "This

guy's trying to poison us with his chemicals." Another participant gets a laugh with "I bet his backyard is full of refrigerators."

Everyone has fun with this part of the exercise, but there's little doubt the people gathered in this circle are here because they want to get beyond stereotypes and work with their neighbors to improve the quality of everyone's life. The question is: Will conducting a listening project really help them in their efforts?

Walters thinks so. Ultimate goals aside, Walters and Hartsock say the value of getting people on both sides of an issue to carefully consider their point of view shouldn't be underestimated.

Courtesy of RSVP

Listening project participants in Statesville, N.C., refine their questionnaire before heading out to do interviews about drug-related issues in the community's housing projects.

The interviewers themselves go through some soul-searching, according to RSVP staff member Jennifer Morgan. Morgan believes that the people asking the questions are the ones most dramatically affected by the listening project. The interviewers may be really thinking about the people they're trying to reach for the very first time. Walters points to the Asheville Diversity in Religion listening project as an example of this. Many of the interviewers began to understand the complexity of anti-gay sentiments in the conservative church community. After talking to a number of ministers, they realized that resistance to homosexuality wasn't necessarily rooted in hatred. For some of the ministers, this resistance was the result of a lived faith that relied on the strict interpretation of scripture.

Whether dealing with the tensions between ministers and gays or organic and conventional farmers, "we've reached a point in civilization where people really need to sit down and talk," Hartsock says after the training session breaks up. The Mountain Partners members have left to begin their three-month project which they hope will yield 40 completed surveys and a shared, community-wide commitment to sustainable agriculture in Madison County.

We've reached a point in civilization where people really need to sit down and talk.

If Hartsock and Walters have their way, more people will sit down together and really listen to each other. "One of the best reasons for doing a listening project is that people surprise you," Walters says. "What they say always surprises you."

He attributes part of the Listening Project's growing success as a grassroots movement to the openness and honesty of the people being interviewed. "People like being surveyed," he says. "They like being asked their opinion. The biggest problem you have in interviewing is people not wanting you to leave."

Hartsock has a busy year ahead of him. Right now there are tentative plans for a listening project in Ohio that will address the issue of environmental racism and a project in Michigan in which militia members will be asked about their goals. Wherever the Listening Project takes him, Hartsock is positive it will help bring people together.

"Whenever strange dogs meet each other, they bark at each other," he says. "And then, they realize they're both dogs." N&T

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THE KITCHEN

Broad planks laid on the raw clay
Composed the floor. Some had cupped
At edges, others at ends, so one made
A higgledy-piggledy journey from stove
To table. The butter churn walked
The jigging timbers, and I passed
And repassed the cynosure of the room:
Herself seated shelling aprons of peas.
Ah, that trundling jar scudding spray
From motive dasher propelling yellow
Gold in spits and jots and tittles, frog-
Eggs of savoury oil gathering slowly
Into a summer island. She waved to me,
Knowing that if I went, I would come again.

— George Scarbrough

George Scarbrough has work in Appalachia Inside Out, Spirit *(Seton Hall University), and the upcoming Bicentennial Celebration anthology,* Homewords II. *He lives and writes in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where he was the guest of honor at his "Big 80" birthday party this past October.*

Chairmen of the Rainforest

by Janet Hearne

An Appalachian craftsman transplants the region's "make-do-or-do-without" inventiveness to the Central American rain forests.

Scott Landis

Chairs made by members of the Honduras Greenwood Project.

When Curtis Buchanan, a Jonesborough, Tenn., Windsor chairmaker, set out to save the rainforests of Honduras, he realized his plan stood a very small chance of succeeding. He intended to teach indigenous people how to construct furniture from lesser-known species of wood, thereby increasing the wood's value and making it less likely to be clear cut.

But Buchanan is used to taking risks. After having grown up in Kingsport, Tenn., he spent much of his late teens and twenties hitchhiking the back roads of the United States, Europe, Mexico, and Central America, often with little or no money in his pocket. Ten years ago, he took a huge risk when he quit his job as a carpenter and moved his wife and two daughters from Marion, N.C., to Jonesborough to start his Windsor chair business. It paid off, however. Eighteen months after he moved to Jonesborough, he had a two-year waiting list for his chairs. The asking price for those chairs has grown steadily, and today his hand-crafted designs range in price from $700 to $2,000, depending on the style. He sells his chairs to private collectors as well as to historical sites such as Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello.

As Buchanan spent more and more time on his chairs, using only hand tools to build them, he entered into a deeper relationship with the wood he worked. He came to appreciate its resiliency, its ability to be formed into objects of beauty and function. He grew concerned about its sustainability in a throw-away world. Eventually, Buchanan became interested in an organization called the Woodworkers' Alliance for Rainforest Protection (WARP), started by his friend Scott Landis and based in Easthampton, Maine; come spring, WARP will be rechristened the Good Woods Alliance to reflect the growing diversity of its membership.

Landis, a writer, started WARP after he had gone to Peru to do a story on a sustainable yield forestry project. Sustainable yield means being able to take trees out of the forest under a managed plan that leaves the forest intact and able to maintain itself.

"What you've got in these Latin forests is a tremendous number of trees — but only a few like rosewood and mahogany have any value," Buchanan explains. "There may be one or two of these trees per acre, and once they're gone, the forest is devalued. It makes it susceptible to being cut by subsistence farmers or cattlemen. The forest is just in the way after the mahogany has been taken out."

Even obtaining something as simple as sandpaper was daunting.

Landis realized the key to saving the vast acres from being clear cut was to add value to the lesser-known species of wood by creating a market for them. He started WARP in 1990 and called on woodworkers in small shops throughout the country to

Scott Landis

Ronny Jadir Antunes of El Carbon, Honduras, splits logs to be used to make furniture at the Honduras Greenwood Project.

test these woods. He brings in wood from Peru and divides it among the woodworkers who judge how it planes, how it works with machine or hand tools, what its uses might be, if it's rot-resistant for outside furniture, and whether it might serve as a substitute for ebony or mahogany. Landis then compiles this information and disseminates it among WARP members and other people who work with wood. WARP also publishes a list of what they've termed "good wood" suppliers, people who sell wood from a sustainable project.

"Some people thought that the best response would be to stop using tropical woods altogether, that it was the best way to resolve the situation," Landis says. "I came to feel that it wouldn't do anything. The timber industry was going to go ahead. Those woodworkers in the arts market — if they opted out of the game, they simply missed an opportunity to advance the process. The rest of it was going to go on with or without them. The issue isn't about tropical woods; it's about good management."

Buchanan came up with his idea to teach woodworking to indigenous people when he read about a similar project in WARP's newsletter, *Understory*. Michael Fortune, a Canadian cabinetmaker who was working on a project in the Yucatan province of Mexico, had run into problems because his project relied on the use of power tools. In a poor country, the cost of the tools and their upkeep were proving to be insurmountable obstacles. Even obtaining something as simple as sandpaper was daunting. In a country where people make $2.50 a day, sandpaper costing $1 a sheet becomes a major expense.

"I started thinking that you don't need glue with the type of chair I can design," Buchanan says. "You don't have to use sandpaper. You can get a better finish with an edge tool like a poke shave or a drawknife. Then you don't have any power tools to deal with; you don't even have to saw lumber. You split the logs, so that eliminates the labor-intensive pit sawing or the expense of buying lumber that's been sawed by power machinery. All you would need to build the chairs is a few hand tools, some sharpening stones, and maybe a couple of clamps."

Buchanan, like others working on the problem, realized that the decimation of the Latin American rain forests, which are found on both sides of the equator in Central and South America, is devastating because the forests help regulate the world's climate, help replenish the world's oxygen supply, and are a source of hundreds of products, including cancer-fighting medicines.

The chairmaker also realized that the rain forests' destruction is an economic problem as much as it is an environmental one. The people of Honduras are poor, and environmental issues don't seem very real to a hungry person. One forester estimates that 80 percent of the cutting is done illegally, despite stringent laws enacted by the Honduran government. Buchanan thought his project might work because it would help add a higher value to the forests. By teaching the rural peasants, known as *campesinos*, to make chairs from the lesser known species, hundreds of dollars could be realized on one tree, instead of the few dollars the raw lumber could bring. More value would result in fewer trees being cut.

Buchanan called Landis and told him about his idea. According to Buchanan, Landis said, "Sounds great, Curtis, but we have no money for the project. We'll have to raise it."

Buchanan also knew this kind of project was more than one person could handle. He called Brian Boggs, a chairmaker in Berea, Ky., and pitched the idea to him. He chose Boggs because he respected his ability and knowledge. "All you have to do with Brian is stick him in the woods and give him a drawknife," Buchanan says. Fortunately for the project, Boggs agreed to help.

WARP made the initial fund-raising contacts and within six months had received a grant of $1,500 from Aid to Artisans, the Farmington, Conn.-based nonprofit organization that works to create economic opportunities for craftspeople in underdeveloped communities around the world. With the seed money in hand, Buchanan came face to face with the reality that he might actually have to follow through on his idea.

All of a sudden, we had the money. It wasn't enough money to make the trip, but it was enough to make me nervous.

"It's real easy to have a good idea and to talk about it all you want. People do it all the time. Then it just goes out the window, and you say, 'You know, we could have done it if we'd had the money,'" Buchanan admits. "All of a sudden, we had the money. It wasn't enough money to make the trip, but it was enough to make me nervous — excited, but nervous now that I was now going to have to put my expertise where my mouth was."

Buchanan then applied for and received a grant of $4,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts international travel grants fund. With an extra $800 from the Hardwood Forestry Fund of Reston, Va., Boggs' airline ticket was covered, and the two men were ready to make their first trip to Central America.

WARP was familiar with the work of the Proyecto Desarrollo del Bosque Latifoliado (PDBL), which is a collaborative agriforestry aid project between the Canadian International Development Agency and the Honduran government. PDBL is working to stabilize people on already cleared land, trying to wean them from the slash-and-burn agriculture they have practiced for centuries.

In October 1993, Buchanan and Boggs set out on a two-week trip to Honduras. During that time, they visited various PDBL project sites, sometimes on muleback, trying to determine which would be best-suited for their project.

What I like is we have a situation here where capitalism can work on a pure level.

"We wanted to look to see if an area had a tradition of chairmaking," Buchanan explains. "We wanted to see if there was a work area, a source of wood, what there was in the way of cohesiveness in the village. Do the people work together? Many of the sites had these things, but it seemed like El Carbon had more cohesiveness, and I guess the reason that they do is they are an indigenous people. They're Pech, and they have a tribal council. They also own their forest, probably 1,000 acres, and they want to save it. In addition, the Pech have a school and a shop area with students already at work."

Certainly, El Carbon was not chosen for its location. The village, situated near the northern coast of Honduras, is a three-and-a-half hour drive from La Ceiba, the nearest town. Neither is El Carbon the garden spot of all Honduras.

"It's dusty, it's hot, and there is nothing to do there," notes Buchanan. "Basically it consists of mud huts on bare ground stuck out in the middle of nowhere. The forest is cut all around it. There's nothing flashy about it, just these poor people living on this land."

In February 1994, Buchanan returned to El Carbon and spent four days in the village doing further testing of various species of wood. While he conducted his tests, his students, ranging in age from 15 to 19, were building a barstool consisting of four legs, 12 rungs, and a top woven from a vine called *membre*. José Santo, a weaver whom the Pech call "Spider," passed on his weaving techniques to the students.

"We built a stool in four days and put it together by flashlight that last night," Buchanan remembers. "It was a joyous occasion. The energy there was incredible."

Then, the last day of the trip, Buchanan found a wood that could be used in constructing furniture.

"It is called *cola de pava*, which means 'tail of the turkey' because of its big leaf," Buchanan says. "There are a lot of nice things about *cola de pava*. First of all, it's not a major canopy tree in the forest. It's a tree that grows to a maximum of 16 inches in diameter, but it grows nice and straight and splits very well, just as clean as can be. It bends well and regenerates from the stump, which makes the management of it very easy. *Cola de pava* is also a tree that, according to PDBL's management plan, would end up yielding to another tree anyway. In other words, if a mahogany were growing next to it, the *cola de pava* would be cut down to get it out of the way of the mahogany so that the mahogany could have more room to grow."

Buchanan brought some of the *cola de pava* back with him to Tennessee to shop test it in preparation for a return trip in May of 1994. During that two-week trip, the Honduran students worked under Boggs' direction. (Buchanan spent most of that particular trip trying to recover his passport and other belongings which had been stolen from his jeep in La Ceiba.) Boggs worked with the students to improve quality control and to impose some order on the workshop. After this, the project was out of money.

Help came in the form of a $5,000 grant from Lee Valley Tools of Canada. Buchanan received the check in December 1994 and immediately made his airline reservations. Landis accompanied Buchanan on this trip to write an article about the project for *Understory* and to gather information to allay the fears that WARP's board had begun to express about the project's effectiveness. WARP's main concern was whether the students could or would work without Buchanan's and Boggs' supervision.

"What was most amazing is that when we returned in December, the students had made 70 pieces of furniture,"

Scott Landis

Curtis Buchanan (in white shirt) shows his shaving technique to Consepcion Quiñonez Gutierrez (l) and Ronny Jadir Antunes (r). José Manuel Antunes works next to Buchanan on the shaving horse, the kind of low-tech hand tool which has allowed the project to flourish.

Buchanan recounts. "They had made 18 chairs, and we hadn't even shown them how to make a chair.

"They were terrible chairs — you couldn't even sit on them. The seats were 22 inches high. The seat on a normal chair is 18 inches high, but they didn't know that. They didn't have any chairs so they made them like stools. They made the front smaller than the back; it tapered in instead of out. But you could see it was a chair, and they had made it all on their own." Also encouraging was the fact that the foresters working in El Carbon had already developed a management plan for the *cola de pava*.

They were terrible chairs — you couldn't even sit on them. . . . But you could see it was a chair, and they had made it all on their own.

During the December trip, Buchanan and his students made bending forms and set up a steam-bending operation. It was decided that Boggs would teach the students how to build a chair out of steam-bent parts as soon as money, an ongoing concern, could be found to finance another trip.

The students' chairmaking skills were refined during Boggs' February 1995 trip to El Carbon. He and Buchanan came up with a design for a small, straight chair with a bent back. It is a dining chair without arms made in a post-and-rung style with a woven back. The first 20 chairs produced were sold to the PDBL foresters. During that trip, Boggs also built a kiln for drying the wood.

While Boggs was in Honduras, the project, now officially called the Honduras Greenwood Project, received a $30,000 grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. This windfall allowed Buchanan to return to El Carbon in May. He found that his students were teaching other young men how to build furniture, a sign that the project can be replicated in other areas.

That is not to say that there haven't been problems. On his most recent trip to El Carbon in August of 1995, Boggs found that the students were having trouble bending the wood.

"They were having typical bending problems," Buchanan says. "The bends were breaking, and they didn't understand why. Solving these problems is not an easy thing. There's years worth of skill we take for granted. In Honduras, you are dealing with teenagers who have had eight weeks of training over two years. They don't have the depth to reach back into their experience and figure these things out. We will continue to have to troubleshoot problems like this until we have someone there to answer questions full-time."

For the moment, Honduran forester Rafael Mesa, whom Buchanan describes as "an honest fellow who loves to laugh," is serving as part-time director for the project. Part of his salary comes from the Honduran Greenwood Project, and part of his expenses are paid by the PDBL.

A recent offer from the Canadian government to provide 100 percent funding for five years may permit the project to hire a director full-time. With this generous offer comes the need to re-evaluate Buchanan's and Boggs' roles.

"We're having to ask ourselves: 'Do we want to give up total control? Do we have the resources to take this project further?'" Buchanan says. "Was our role just to see the seed is planted well and then go on to other things, or is it better to concentrate on one area and make sure we have success there?"

These are questions he must answer in the coming months. Buchanan would like to see the project have a full-time director, not only to oversee this project, but also to go into other areas. A town in Guatemala has expressed interest in the program. Buchanan would also like to train other "gringo" woodworkers to help with the project.

"I've already got four American chairmakers picked out," Buchanan reports. "They would have to be able to handle the uncomfortable living conditions, the insects (which Buchanan says eat you up in tiers), the food, the sleeping arrangements. They have to have an empathy for the people they are working with."

Plans are being discussed for the possible installation of a complete shop and show rooms in a slightly more accessible location, perhaps La Ceiba.

"We've had difficulties because the workshop is in a school in the village of El Carbon," Landis said. "It's not really an environment we have control over. You're beholden to other people who hold the keys and

Scott Landis

Curtis Buchanan stands behind his protegés (from l to r): José Manuel Antunes, 15, Alexis Antonio Andrades, 17, Ronny Jadir Antunes, 16, José Pablo Cordova, 19, and Consepcion Quiñonez Gutierrez, 18.

Scott Landis

Ronny Jadir Antunes puts the finishing touches on a stool.

set the schedule. If we were to move into the next phase and have our own shop set up in a location that was more accessible, if we could sell items and bring people in from other communities who were interested in the project, then the whole enterprise could really grow enormously."

The next step also involves developing marketing outlets for the furniture. Buchanan sees help coming from non-profit organizations such as Oxfam, Serve, and Pueblo to People which work with rural artisans worldwide to help market their handmade goods. He even envisions the Honduran chairs in the Smith & Hawken gardening catalogue one day. He is also willing to bow to his students' wishes.

"If they want to form a cooperative, that's fine," Buchanan says. "Or if they want to be individual entrepreneurs, I think that would be fine too. What I like is we have a situation here where capitalism can work on a pure level. What we are trying to do is to educate students on what their product is worth."

According to a story Boggs brought back from his August trip, the students seem to be catching on.

"One of the guys was just about finished making a little child's chair," Buchanan recounts. "And Brian asked him, 'What are you going to do with it? Take it home?' He said no, he was going to take the bus to La Ceiba — it's a four-hour trip by bus — and sell the chair on the street for $5. The idea is not so much what he's getting for it, but that he sees the possibilities. He sees that people want to buy this chair, and all he has to do is go to the market and sell it.

"That's real good," says Buchanan with satisfaction. "It's what we want." N&T

Janet Hearne is completing a B.A. in English with a minor in journalism at East Tennessee State University and is student assistant for Now & Then. *She has had several articles published in* Now & Then *and other publications. She is the author of the book,* Only in California.

WANDERLUST

from a photograph of my grandfather

Hoyt Cadle is dwarfed.
His mules, waiting for him
To finish loading the cut lumber
Into the makeshift sledge,
Seem enormous before him.
The tall pine beside him stretches
Out an intricate and extensive web
Of shadow that nearly engulfs him,
Small and puny,
Grasping a living
From the West Virginia hills
With tiny defeated hands.

He is laying fence posts in,
Trying still to tame the land,
Not yet fully beaten.
The mules, at least, are prosperous
And carefree behind their blinders
Under the collars and traces
Of their calling.

Hoyt Cadle never found his
Calling.
He preached a little,
Taught a little,
Mined a little,
Farmed and
Sang gospel,
Joined the CCC and the KKK and
Worked for the WPA.

His heart never divulged its
Secret desire
Even to Hoyt,
But the search made his brain
Grow foreign tendrils
Which eventually did
What none of the farming
Or mining or
Teaching and preaching could do:
Made him admit
He was finally beat,
And he lay down long enough to die.

— Leah J. Prewitt

Leah J. Prewitt, a native of Lexington, Ky., is chief federal defender for Eastern Tennessee. She is a finalist in this year's Robert Penn Warren Poetry Prize competition sponsored by the Cumberland Poetry Review. *Her work has been published in the Fall 1995 issue of the* Review.

The *Art* of Education

by Boone Davis

The author is a high school senior who has participated in two Where Art Meets Ed conferences, once as an assistant and once as a student participant.

Welcome to Hazel Green, Ky., the place Where Art Meets Ed.

Hazel Green, a Wolfe County foothills mountain town known either as "little Slade" or "Campton without the Dairy Queen," cannot be found on most Kentucky state maps. The people who live here are friendly enough, it's the only place to get beer for miles around, and the gas station gives away lollipops. Still, it is an odd place to begin a revolution.

Each August since 1993, over 100 artists and educators — the majority from Kentucky — have gathered at what was once the Hazel Green Boys' Academy and try to integrate arts into education. Where Art Meets Ed, a four-day conference, is designed to build a "network of friends in art education," joining together the people who make art with those who design classroom applications and develop strategies for change in their schools and communities. Most educators at the conference are K-12 teachers, but each conference draws a smattering of college students, student teachers, administrators, and community activists.

Where Art Meets Ed is based on the firm belief that art is not a frill, not a dispensable add-on to the core curricula of primary and secondary schools. It should not be one of the first programs to go when the budget cutters roll up their sleeves and get to work. Instead, Where Art Meets Ed organizers see art as a crucial educational tool, one that can provide that all-important experiential dimension to learning.

"We use the workshops to suggest that any culture's history is more meaningful when history is connected to the things of beauty created by that culture. And our understanding of those things of beauty and of the culture that produced them increases when we make them ourselves and then share our work with others."

This is Robert Gipe speaking. A Kingsport, Tenn., native, Gipe serves as Where Art Meets Ed's director as well as the educational services director for Appalshop, a media arts center based in Whitesburg, Ky. A lanky blend of libertarian activist and camp counselor, he embodies Where Art Meets Ed's dual spirit of work and play.

I wondered, "Is my soul really in the mood for this much liberation?"

"What do we prepare our kids to do once they get out of school? In this country, schools have prepared kids to take their place in the industrial machine and hush. There's lots of problems with this approach, not the least of which is that the machine isn't providing the jobs it used to," comments Gipe. "We're working for schools that give a more central place to the arts. Hopefully that will mean schools that are more focused on students becoming productive, creative, and critical — rather than simply being obedient."

Where Art Meets Ed was launched by a substantial grant from the New York-based Nathan Cummings Foundation. The conference has also been co-sponsored by the Foothills Artists of Morgan County, Ky.; the Wolfe County Arts Association; and the University of Louisville's Women's Center.

The initial one-time Cummings Foundation grant which enabled Appalshop and its partners to allow teachers to attend the conference virtually for free is long gone. The sponsoring organizations continue to raise funds for the program, but the largest part of the budget comes from teachers who cajole money out of their principals and their school districts to underwrite their participation in the program.

Changing Lives

Where Art Meets Ed is not your standard teacher in-service. No one stands before an overhead presenting transparencies full of helpful hints about how to boost a student's confidence. Discussions about teaching happen between artists and

teachers as they work on tile mosaics or learn Greek shadow puppetry. The conference's methods are reminiscent of an older way of transferring knowledge which flourished when people spent more time working with their hands and with each other, a method rooted in oral traditions and in face-to-face learning.

In this country, schools have prepared kids to take their place in the industrial machine and hush.

"We want to create a relaxed atmosphere. We want people to learn because they want to learn," explains Gipe. During the conference, then, elementary teachers work right beside children and learn drum making from Donjuma Ighalo, a Nigerian-born master drummer now living in Louisville, Ky. College education majors and high school band teachers beam with pride as they show off split oak baskets and handbound books made in workshops with Janine Musser of Wolfe County, Ky., and Catherine Rubin of Louisville. Middle-aged teachers with no prior musical training end the weekend by performing half a dozen songs on gourdimers, a type of dulcimer they made themselves out of a gourd.

"In most school systems, we're more interested in how many kids are sitting in rows than in how many lives we change," notes Zambia Nkrumah, a math and science teacher at a Louisville, Ky., middle school. She teaches African dance at Where Art Meets Ed.

Changing lives is what Nkrumah and singer, conflict mediator, and dance teacher Samiyra Shabazz are all about. Nkrumah and Shabazz work through Afamba, a Louisville artists' organization, and through the Parkland Boys and Girls Club in West Louisville to bring traditional art into the city's African American communities. Together, Parkland and Afamba supply the core of Where Art Meets Ed's African American programming.

For example, the Parkland Boys and Girls Club is the home of the Drum Corps, a group of teenage boys led by Ighalo; in addition to participating in the drum-making workshop, the Drum Corps has also played for the dance workshop. Ed White supervises a mask program, while Esaa Zakee conducts a jewelry-making program. Ighalo, White, and Zakee have all made the trip to Hazel Green to serve as workshop facilitators; their students participate in the teaching of their own program's workshops and take part in others as well.

Jeff Whetstone

Members of the Parkland Boys & Girls Club of Louisville, Ky., lead an African mask workshop at the Where Art Meets Ed conference.

"The artists chosen to conduct workshops respect traditional arts and community-based traditions," Gipe says. "We take care to choose artists with grounding in different cultural backgrounds — African, Appalachian, Greek, Native American — and to create workshops that provide rural and inner-city teachers with projects they can do in their classrooms, projects which will make sense within the context of their children's culture." Providing opportunities for cross-cultural understanding in both urban and rural schools is indeed central to Where Art Meets Ed's purpose, according to Gipe. The necessity for facilitating such understanding is illustrated by a story Nkrumah tells.

She had been teaching at a Louisville mental institution just before her first trip to Hazel Green. When she told one of her patients, an Eastern Kentuckian, that she would be accompanying 10 African American children to participate in the first Where Art Meets Ed, he looked very worried. "You know, they're different down there," he informed her with concern. "I'm just telling you this because I like you." Nkrumah confesses, "I did have this moment of hesitation about whether the kids really needed to be exposed to this."

There is laughter in her voice now. She successfully overcame her moment's hesitation and ventured east with her students where she met some of those "different" mountain folk. "Some of the people we have met at Hazel will be at our weddings and our funerals," she now acknowledges. "We found out that the people of Appalachia are our people. Appalachians are people of the soil, and we are people of the soil. They have known struggle as well."

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Connections

In August, 1993, at the first Where Art Meets Ed, I attended the creative writing workshop conducted by author Gurney Norman. There were 12 or 13 of us in the little classroom, most of whom were originally from some part of Appalachia. At the session's outset, using only his peripheral vision and a perfectly ordinary piece of chalk, Norman drew a credible representation of Kentucky on the classroom blackboard. He then began to mark the right-hand side of his drawing with slash marks.

"Rivers," he explained offhandedly. "Now, where does this flow into — this tributary here?" He pointed to one of the confluences he'd created.

"Monongahela," someone called out.

"No, this goes into the Ohio. You're thinking of something else."

Next he busily filled Kentucky with circles. These were to represent Kentucky towns. "OK," he said, pointing to one of the circles in the middle of the board, a point where several of the slash marks converged. "This here's the sort of town that separates Eastern and Central Kentucky. Pay attention to which streams are converging here. All right. So anybody want to take a guess at what it is?"

"Would that be Slade?" offered one student.

"Nah, that's Campton, isn't it?" asserted another.

Norman shook his head, puzzled and slightly pained. "Beattyville," he said with a wince. "The answer was Beattyville." His energy boosted, perhaps by our ignorance, he commenced to draw a slightly off-center triangle which he surrounded with more circles. The triangle was Pine Mountain.

Now, he said, speaking as he drew more circles, "this here's Payne Gap . . . Hazard . . . Harlan . . . Jenkins." Norman was recounting the small Eastern Kentucky coal towns where most of his fiction takes place. Swooping back to the slash-mark rivers, he began to combine the lines at strategic intervals until they changed from groups of three into a long, stringy sliver swimming about the circles and past the triangle. The little scribbles had become the big mess.

"Now here's where the Kentucky flows past the Pine Mountain. Eventually it'll wind up in the Ohio which dumps into the Mississippi, which dumps into the Gulf of Mexico."

He paused reflectively for a moment and glanced at us. When he spoke again, his voice was hurried, as if what he would say next was of only preliminary importance. "Now. There are thousands of people who live in that little area . . ."

This is how Gurney Norman began to teach us about literary structure. The thousands of people who live in Southeastern Kentucky, the "little area" Norman describes, barely register on the national census, nor can most of the streams and rivers he sketched on the board be found in any but the most exhaustive of almanacs. But it is the interconnection among the mountains, their people, and the way these waters flow that Norman tried to convey that day. For Norman, an understanding of structure begins with an understanding of borders.

Jeff Whetstone

Roy Adkins (l) and Robert Gipe (r) participate in an African dance workshop conducted by Samiyra Shabazz (with drum) and Zambia Nkrumah at Where Art Meets Ed.

Dancing Our Way to Clarity

At Where Art Meets Ed 2 in 1994, I took part in the African dance workshop in Hazel Green's gymnasium. I was the youngest participant and, until Gipe showed up, the only male. Along with 15 white Kentucky school teachers, I was about to learn the next move of a traditional African dance being taught by Nkrumah and Shabazz. From the outset, it was apparent that Nkrumah and Shabazz were two very gifted individuals. For one thing, these women could shrug like no hillbilly has ever shrugged.

In the dance, I think the women were "keepers of the village." The men — and this I do remember clearly — were the "protectors of the village." As Nkrumah and Shabazz demonstrated the women's movement, a rhythmic, circular thrusting of the hip, Robert and I tried to synchronize our hunched stomps.

When was the last time you saw a city in Africa in the news?

I can't say that I felt anything more romantic than fear at the outset. I wondered, "Is my soul really in the mood for this much liberation?" And of course, it would be silly of me to speak about the spirit of Africa manifesting itself in that Eastern Kentucky gymnasium. What I can say is that I felt a sense of history: I was participating in something that had been done by millions of people in one way or another for centuries.

There was something in the dance that brought on a sense of clarity; there was purpose to each and every movement. The dance reinforces the general importance of both men and women in village life, while granting each individual dancer a sense of personal pride in his or her role. Personal pride, alas, may have gotten the better of me toward the end of the dance. "Show me the lion who will attack this village," I thought. "Show him to me."

When it was over, we sat in the center circle of the gym floor. Tired and dishevelled, many of us preferred to lie on our backs. Shabazz, smiling, began the discussion. "When was the last time you saw

a city in Africa in the news?" she asked.

It's a good question. I thought about it, and I'm still thinking about it well over a year later. How far have we come since the days we regarded Africa as "the dark continent"? Why does the West so thoroughly ignore Africa and its cultural contributions in favor of those from Europe? I refuse to believe that racism is the entire answer.

While we were gathered at center court, Shabazz and Nkrumah went on to talk with us about the dance we had done and its relation to community life and political struggle in specific parts of Africa. Their teaching was gentle and quiet, in marked contrast to the noise and high energy of the dance; it was indirect and shot through with a strong sense of an assumed spiritual connection among all people who want to understand the world and want it to work a little better.

Through both the workshop and the discussion that followed, I was reminded that there are other complex systems for making sense of the world, valid systems that are fundamentally different from Western thought. Understanding these systems — and helping others to understand — takes patience. It is difficult to convey in the classroom. It would probably take this kind of training.

Striking a Balance

"Knowledge of your region and culture breeds confidence," says Angelyn DeBord. "And this confidence will breed excellence, no matter what the field." DeBord is a storyteller and actress reared in Western North Carolina and currently living in Scott County, Va. For the past three years, she has conducted a storytelling workshop at Where Art Meets Ed.

DeBord seems to personify what Gipe calls the Hazel Green artist. "She's someone who can stand toe-to-toe with any artist anywhere, but who doesn't reduce art to some rarefied, glass-bubble status." Her voice, the chief tool of any good storyteller, flows with a sing-song crackle indigenous to the mountain region. When she begins to speak, her eyes do not focus on the audience but drift instead towards the ceiling and corners of the room. Her stories are, for the most part, memories. Deliberately, she will etch out small verbal caricatures of a grandmother, a ghost, or a mountain. Then, as a teacher should, she allows her students to see for themselves why this particular account has been brought to their attention. At her best, DeBord encourages her audience to recollect the power of its own history.

She explains her work as an artist working in education in the schools of Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina: "School systems are not respecting the children's backgrounds. Children who feel self-conscious about their voices, about the way they speak, are going to learn to be self-conscious about their heritage." In her workshops, both at Where Art Meets Ed and in school systems throughout the year, DeBord tries to dispel this kind of alienation and self-consciousness. She does her best to make education more accessible to mountain students by grounding it in their own experience and putting it into their own words.

Jeff Whetstone

Leon Kassipedes and Cristina Navratilova of Pavanoix Poor Puppet Theatre perform for Where Art Meets Ed conferees.

It may seem improbable for teachers to send their students out into their own communities to hunt for ghost stories, as DeBord does, in order to trace America's spiritual heritage. But perhaps it seems improbable because we have forgotten that the study of history was never meant to replace human experience. Instead, the two were meant to yield insight into one another. Striking a new balance between book learning and learning through experience is part of Where Art Meets Ed's basic mission.

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There is a wonderful old country saying which goes: "A dog don't like a bone. He likes what's in it." The same is true for students and school. It is not so much learning that grieves those of us who are students as the way in which we are made to learn. It is not so much what our teachers are trying to teach us as the way in which schools are being run. We have all, teachers and students alike, accepted as an incontrovertible fact for so long that students dislike school that we have been less than diligent in challenging what it is about current teaching methods and schools we dislike.

Before teachers begin to teach, it is imperative they ask themselves certain questions: Could I learn this if it were taught to me in this same manner? If this were taught to me, what would it mean? A teacher should not hesitate to explore nonconventional teaching techniques with an open mind.

Every year, during the first week of August, educators and artists gather together in one tiny Appalachian town and ask themselves those sorts of questions. They prove that change is possible. These are the people who pursue the art of education by pursuing the arts. These are the people who know that education itself is the truest art form. N&T

Boone Davis is a senior at Henry Clay High School in Lexington, Ky.

Reviews

Voices From the Valley
edited by Jeanne McDonald
The Knoxville Writers' Guild
Knoxville, Tenn. - 1994
$14.95 (paper)

Voices From the Valley is a handsome, well-edited, and significant work.

Published by the Knoxville (Tenn.) Writers' Guild as an anthology of Knoxville writers, this book contains diverse writing styles, subjects, and genres: short stories, excerpts from novels-in-progress, poetry, and personal essays. This volume places work by writers of national reputation such as National Book Award winner Joyce Carol Thomas, Appalachian writer Wilma Dykeman, novelist Leslie Garrett, and former Rolling Stone editor Chet Flippo alongside others such as poets Kay Newton, Candance Wages, and Holly Beth Brown whose literary reputations are in the making.

What makes this work especially noteworthy is that in this day of major publishing houses looking toward the blockbuster bestseller and the corporate bottom line, *Voices* represents an example of local publishing made possible by a community-based effort. A glance at the acknowledgments page reveals support from various sources, including the *Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel*, the East Tennessee Historical Society, Davis-Kidd Booksellers, and numerous other area businesses and individuals.

This anthology, then, represents the efforts of a group of writers who are seeking a way to publish their work within their own community, without relying on the publishing houses of New York or Boston. It is an effort reminiscent of the 1960s when we saw significant work published by writers' co-ops.

And *Voices* is a success. It is now into its second printing, having already sold out the initial run of 2,500 copies. In addition, Davis-Kidd's Knoxville store reports that after having been their leading seller in November and December of 1994, *Voices* continues to ring up steady sales. So here we have local writers, a local publication, and a local audience.

But that by no means suggests that the book is limited or provincial. Instead, this book is regional in the best sense of the word: It has local origins, but its concerns are universal. In her poem "Sorting," for example, Florence McNabb balances the mundane with the universal, playing the ordinary specifics of household chores against hard emotional truths. Those who remember growing up under the spell of religion in the southern mountains should read Jack Reese's poem "Looking for God in Hendersonville" for its seriocomic presentation of details. If fiction is more to your liking, consider Don Williams' story "Comforter" for its intermingling of past and present, its evocation of place, and the mysterious truth of how the past lives inside us and can transform us. In the category of nonfiction, Jack Neely's "Excavating Literary Knoxville" not only establishes a context for the writing in this anthology, but it is itself a fine piece of literary journalism.

These samples merely suggest the range of voices in this anthology: voices that speak to us of past and present, generous voices inviting us to experience the world again through language as crafted and real as the life we're living right here, right now.

— Jeff Daniel Marion

Jeff Daniel Marion has recently published a poetry collection entitled Lost & Found *and is Appalachian Center director at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.*

Bluegrass, Blackmarket
a video directed by Hans Luxemburger
produced by Appalshop Films
Whitesburg, Ky. - 1994
$150 VHS Color Format

In *Bluegrass, Blackmarket,* a documentary on the cultivation of marijuana in Eastern Kentucky, the countryside is idyllic, with well-kept houses and trailers, manicured lawns, and no trash along the Appalshop video roadside. Industrious farmers plant tobacco and harvest hay. But another more lucrative industry offers temptations for their enterprising neighbors and public officials.

Director Hans Luxemburger uses the electronically disguised voice of a pot farmer to introduce us to a search for truth, morality, and underground economic opportunity somewhere out there in the "hills and hollers." Throughout the piece, this cinematically "masked" farmer spins yarns about philosophy, phases of the moon, and strategies for cultivating more potent pot, for producing higher yields, and for avoiding "John Law."

Bluegrass, Blackmarket is scheduled to debut this spring over Kentucky Educational Television on Appalshop's Headwaters television series, where Luxemberger began as an intern in 1991. This extremely well-crafted piece has won awards at several major national festivals.

Ironically, as the video points out, a half century earlier, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials were telling Kentucky River farmers how to cultivate hemp for the military's production of rope during World War II. Now, the Drug Enforcement Agency task force troops are out to arrest Kentucky River farmers and destroy the unsanctioned crop. The ominous drone of helicopter blades welcomes us on a live, camouflaged jaunt in pursuit of patches of hemp woven into the weedy cornfields.

Through a kind of oral history told by several narrators, Luxemberger unmasks a tragic tale of graft, bribes, and freedom lost. Reminiscent of the classical expository cinema style practiced by the late American documentary filmmaker Emile de Antonio, a style in which the story is not mediated by a narrator, the *Bluegrass, Blackmarket* narrative uses interviews with storytellers and truthsayers. These include Beattyville, Ky., newspaper editor, Bob Smith, and imprisoned ex-Lee County sheriff, Johnny Mann. Their tales and homilies are interwoven with historical clips from both the World War II-era archival film, *Hemp for Victory,* and from a TV crime news report detailing the arrests of Mann and several other law enforcement officers for extortion.

Seamless editing and well-selected musical tracks tie the story segments together as newspaperman Smith steadfastly takes the higher moral ground, and ex-sheriff Mann and the anonymous pot farmer give their all-too-human rationales for their crimes. The musical soundtrack

Jeff Whetstone

Pot grows tall and lush in the fertile Bluegrass soil of Eastern Kentucky.

for the show is most effective and consists of three distinctive country music selections: "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down," "Kentucky," and, perhaps ironically, the inspirational "Great High Mountain," performed by bluegrass music legend Larry Sparks. (The irony of "Great High Mountain" resides in the fact that it was written by Kentuckian Keith Whitley who died of a drug and alcohol overdose just as he approached country music superstardom.)

After Mann's fall, precipitated by an FBI sting operation, he talks from behind prison walls about the personal costs that the drug trade has exacted from him: "Forget about the easy dollar . . . there ain't nothing no more important than freedom." Though Mann seemingly has found his personal redemption and dreams of eventual release in 2011, the video suggests that corruption is inevitable: It reports that Mann's successor as sheriff has been arraigned on similar charges. As Mann himself concludes, "You can't read the Bible and be 'Law' too."

Be it in Kentucky or South America, an age-old history repeats itself. Given the economic incentive and society's appetite, the cultivation of marijuana will continue regardless of penalties bestowed upon the harvesters. The only saving grace seems to be that there is not yet the mass bloodshed associated with the Colombian fields of coca.

With this illicit enterprise, another legacy has been added to Bluegrass lore, along with fast horses, bourbon, tobacco, moonshine, strip mining, and poverty. Kentucky is still a "dark and bloody ground." The soil is fertile, the climate conducive, and the pot plants grow tall. Community and family, the lifeblood of freedom, are often easily sacrificed wherever the harvest is reaped.

— Jack Wright

A native of Wise, Va., Jack Wright is assistant professor at Ohio University Graduate School of Film in Athens, Ohio.

Old Wounds, New Words: Poems from the Appalachian Poetry Project

edited by Bob Henry Baber, George Ella Lyon, and Gurney Norman

The Jesse Stuart Foundation
Ashland, Ky. - 1994
$11.95 (paper)

Certainly a collective cheer and a chorus of congratulations went up last year when writers Bob Henry Baber, George Ella Lyon, and Gurney Norman at last published *Old Wounds, New Words,* a collection of Appalachian poetry.

The Appalachian region has long been in need of a single volume where its many poetic voices coalesce. After several false starts and more than a decade of pursuing publication, this trio of editors has finally given to the region such an anthology. *Old Wounds, New Words* contains 126 poems contributed by 91 Appalachian poets.

The Appalachian Poetry Project began in 1980 with a series of poetry workshops around the region. The editors chose some of the poems written in the workshops for inclusion in what eventually became *Old Wounds, New Words* and then gleaned additional poems from sources such as regional journals and small magazines.

Upon first glance, some readers may be quite surprised by the many unfamiliar names included in this work. It may appear that the editors have neglected the poetic heritage of Appalachia in pursuit of a contemporary anthology; the works of poets such as James Still and Jesse Stuart, for example, are conspicuously absent. But this collection does not purport to be a definitive anthology of Appalachian poetry, if indeed such a collection were even possible. The anthology simply represents Appalachia's many voices, voices which tell of the region's variety, its potential, its growth and change over the years as well as its traditions.

While *Old Wounds, New Words* is certainly just plain good reading, it also serves as a wonderful introduction to Ap-

palachian poetry, providing a basic understanding of the important regional writers in the 1960s and 1970s as well as acquainting the reader with new voices on the rise. The book should also work well as a text in classrooms from high school to graduate school.

Appalachia certainly has a long-standing poetic tradition. George Ella Lyon's lovely yet direct discussion of that tradition attests to its longevity and to the fundamental influences of the first modern Appalachian poets, poets such as Jesse Stuart, James Still, Louise McNeill, and Byron Herbert Reece. She prepares the reader not only for the collection's variety but also shows us the commonalities among the poets. Supplying sure-footed guidance, Lyon's essay imparts lessons necessary to understanding the collective nature of Appalachian poetry.

Included in this well-rounded sampling are widely published poets who would surely be read in any contemporary Appalachian literature course. These include, among others, Fred Chappell, Maggie Anderson, Jo Carson, Jeff Daniel Marion, Kathryn Stripling Byer, Jim Wayne Miller, and Robert Morgan. But these well-known poets do not much overshadow the wonderful talents of many fine, if lesser known, poets, writers such as Lillie Chaffin, Sydney Farr, and Jane Wilson Joyce. This collection presents the premier voices, the folks instrumental in making our regional poetry.

And the poems themselves surprise and delight. They create empathy and express anger; they deal with political issues. There are, of course, poems about coal mining, farming, and family. Several poems about grandparents are among the highlights, including pieces by Fred Chappell, Bennie Lee Sinclair, and Mary Joan Coleman.

Particularly noteworthy examinations of family relationships are poems by Barbara Smith and Ann Roney. Smith's suspenseful poem "Lines" utilizes the literal act of rock climbing as a metaphor for the connection between mother and son, while Roney's angry "Gift Card" expresses the often tenuous relationship between mother and daughter.

Appalachia's culture and its environment are the themes of several poems. Among these, Mark DeFoe's poems are beautiful, sensory, and reveal an intense awareness of the universal meaning within individual experience. Exemplary of the quality of many of the poems included in the anthology, his poem "Driving the Gauley River, Listening to the Radio" talks about listening to a song which tells a poignant story and reveals how that song can transform our own experience if we listen closely enough.

In a book such as *Old Wounds, New Words,* there is an emotional struggle between sorrow and joy, between frustration and peace, between then and now. This is a book that reminds us all of the power of the written word. Like old familiar songs, these poems are worth reading, all the voices are worth hearing, again and again.

— Susan O'Dell Underwood

Susan O'Dell Underwood, assistant professor of English at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., teaches a course in Appalachian poetry. She writes poetry and short fiction and recently completed her dissertation on Fred Chappell.

Something Permanent
Photographs by Walker Evans
Poetry by Cynthia Rylant

Harcourt Brace & Co.
New York - 1994
$17.00 (hardcover)

You have to give Cynthia Rylant 10 points from the get-go for sheer guts. She has written a book of poems inspired by a series of Walker Evans' photographs from his Farm Security Administration (FSA) days and aimed at the young adult market. There's not one of these young adult's parents who is going to pick up *Something Permanent* without thinking of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.*

Granted, *Something Permanent* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* are birds of a very different feather. Besides, no one said James Agee has dibs on Walker Evans. Nevertheless, any writer who appropriates Evans' work for her subject matter has to expect a few raised eyebrows and unfavorable comparisons, to say the least. It takes some moxie to attempt a feat such as *Something Permanent*, and one can't help admire Rylant for it.

The problem with *Something Permanent* is that Rylant's derring-do does not extend past the book's concept. The book consists of 28 short poems providing a narrative context for 28 of Evans' FSA photographs. The poems are consistently similar to one another in tone, voice, movement, and language. Few of the poems serve to illuminate Evans' remarkable work; in fact, many of them reduce it to the level of cliché.

Consider the book's first poem, "Photograph." On the facing page, there is a photograph of a barefoot young boy sitting almost daintily in a straight-backed chair and looking the camera straight in the eye. To his right is a wall sporting an amazing collage of drugstore advertisements, including a life-sized Santa Claus as well as two women and one baby, (again, all life-sized), insurance calendars, and photographs. There is a chifferobe in the corner. On it, amidst the knickknacks, sits a cartoon cow figurine. The two halves of the photograph make a wonderful study in contrasts: the rather dignified child next to the pop art of his era. Yet the poem Rylant culls from the image ignores what gives this photograph its allure:

> He washed his feet for the picture,
> even his knees,
> and wondered about that man
> who cared enough to want him to sit
> there
> for a photograph
> even though he didn't have
> nothing good to hold in his hands,
> nor even a dog to sit by his chair.
> It gave him, briefly,
> some sort of feeling
> of just being enough.

That there is the poem in its entirety, and it's representative of what is wrong with much of this collection. Not only is there nothing distinctive about the language of the poem, it's also sentimental as all get-out. Wasn't Walker Evans swell for photographing this kid who "didn't have/ nothing good to hold in his hands"? The fact is that the kid had plenty of good stuff

to hold in is hands, starting with that goofy-looking cow. The expression on the boy's face does not impress one as humble, as though he were possessed of the feeling of "just being enough." Hell, he looks like he thought he was doing Evans a favor by letting him take the picture.

But let us not forget that these are poems about the Depression-era South, so all the poor people are necessarily humble, simple, and good. Even James Agee fell prey to such sentiments, but Agee had the no-holds-barred word power that makes his readers forgive him his trespasses. In *Something Permanent*, Rylant relies on a plain-spoken style that I assume is supposed to evoke a folksy, down-home feeling. Sometimes it works, for example in the poem "Grave":

> It was customary to decorate
> a child's grave with something pretty
> from the house
> and a china plate
> was as pretty as they had,
> though it gave them
> not one bit of solace,
> and they worried
> late in the evening
> some dog or somebody
> had come along
> and tipped it over,
> making their boy's grave
> look like a foolish thing
> and it wasn't.
> It wasn't.

But more often, the poems in this collection left me unsatisfied. They are short — 10 to 15 lines on average — and after so many pages of the flat-prose approach, they begin to read more like captions. Especially problematic is the fact that most of these poems would not work at all without their "triggering" photographs. Only a few, such as "Grave," along with "Mission" and "Bed," are strong enough to stand on their own without visual aids.

It's easy to imagine why Rylant wanted to write these poems. Evans' work teems with minute details that suggest so much about the lives being documented. What writer wouldn't be tempted to create a world with the raw material Evans provides? But most of the poems in *Something Permanent* don't add to the stories these photographs tell. Rylant has demonstrated considerable skill and imagination in her previous work. It's a shame she didn't use the full force of her talent to make these poems as memorable as the photographs that served as their inspiration.

— Frances O'Roark Dowell

Frances O'Roark Dowell has an M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and is currently working as a paralegal in the Public Defender's Office in Elizabethton, Tenn.

Tennessee Woman: An Infinite Variety
by Wilma Dykeman

Wakestone Books
Newport, Tenn. - 1993
$14.95 (hardback)

For an introduction to many of Tennessee's heroines, both sung and unsung, Wilma Dykeman's *Tennessee Woman: An Infinite Variety* is the book to read. In fact, it is virtually the only book to read.

There is the Tennessee Women's History Project's 1993 *Tennessee Women: A Guide for Teachers* by Carole Stanford Bucy, and Dykeman herself contributed a 30-page essay to *Tennessee Women: Past and Present* which was issued as part of the Decade of Tennessee Women project. That 1977 limited edition volume, however, is now out-of-print. Because she was concerned about this scarcity of information about the many noted (and occasionally notorious) Tennessee women, Bucy urged Dykeman to update and expand her earlier essay to book length. Dykeman, Tennessee's state historian since 1982 and author of such acclaimed works as *The Tall Woman*, agreed to take on the task.

Not claiming to be inclusive, the book is an appetizer, selectively sampling women's lives and whetting the reader's appetite for further study. Dykeman's ability to capture the essence of a woman's character and contributions to Tennessee's story by mixing facts with colorful anecdotes and dialogue makes this book enjoyable as well as informative reading. In the opening section, she draws the reader into vignettes of six Tennessee women who represent the diversity found in the remainder of the book: a nameless Appalachian woman, a Metropolitan Opera star, a leader of the Cherokee Indians, a women's rights advocate, an African American Southern belle, and a homemaker/political leader, who "always knew that politics was and is too important to be left to the politicians."

Written as an extended essay illustrated with multiple examples, *Tennessee Woman* is organized organically rather than chronologically, with one topic growing naturally out of the previous one. For example, Dykeman begins with three of the nation's First Ladies (Rachel Donelson Jackson, Sarah Childress Polk, and Eliza McCardle Johnson), whom she classifies as "inspirers." She then moves on to those she terms "the inspired," women such as Memphis juvenile court judge Camille McGee Kelley, blues singer Bessie Smith, pop singer Dinah Shore, and country music greats Dottie West, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, and Kitty Wells.

This latter section, however, illustrates a basic problem with the book's organization. To get a complete picture of Tennessee's female musicians, for example, the reader must jump from pages two and three (opera) to pages 36 and 37 (blues, pop, and country music), and then add the information found on pages 97 and 98 (more country music). This task is made even more difficult because the book uses no chapter divisions or headings.

Since *Tennessee Woman* is written for the general reader, Dykeman does not document her sources, and she does not provide a bibliography. However, even the general reader, whom Dykeman wishes "to inform and inspire," would benefit from the inclusion of a list of sources for further reading. The index does aid the reader in finding information about specific women, but it needs more subject listings, such as "the suffrage movement" or "women and education," to be truly useful as a reference.

Still, in spite of these drawbacks, the slim size of this volume belies the wealth of information it contains. This book not only presents us with those worthy women credited with many "firsts" (for example, the nation's first female elected

Bath Stories
(for Heather)

At night, in the bath, Heather likes to hear
about boys hurtling toward Planet Sensitivo.
Tyler goes, who lied to her, and Townsend,
who threw the volleyball too hard.
Though at first they resist, one touch of the
golden stone of kindness
and they speak gently, ask the girls to play,
pick wildflowers, won't fight.
If girls act mean, they too go Goddess-speed
to Sensitivo. As need be some zoom off
to Planet Anger to learn to speak up.

And she likes my Barbie stories,
the one where Animal-Rights-Activist Barbie
goes to Mardi Gras, finds herself
in the throbbing heart of the city
at a secret party
where Elvis has been hiding,
hogging beignets, dancing Cajun to get back in shape.
Bill Clinton's there, and Socks.
Bill gives Heather the autographs she's been wanting,
one for each kid in Mrs. Vinson's class.
Thanks to Lobbyist Barbie
Socks reigns as Mardi Gras King,
Socks just-saved from a Redneck bullet
by a brave armadillo who thinks she's a cat.
Queen Armadillo can't "meow," won't eat mice,
but Socks is non-judgmental,
unlike some.

By this time I've coaxed Heather
out of the bath — I'm a matador,
waving my towel, Heather's a wet, naked, stubborn
little bull. "Toro" and I make our way to her room,
"And then what happened, Mama?
Then what happened?"

— Marilyn Kallet

Marilyn Kallet is director of the creative writing program at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is the author of five books including poetry, translation, criticism, and critical essays. In 1996, Blair Press will publish the multicultural anthology Worlds in Our Words: Contemporary American Women Poets, *co-edited by Kallet and Patricia Clark.*

sheriff, first coed, and the first women to own an insurance agency), but it also tells about some villainous women, such as the mother of outlaw John Murrel who taught her son to steal. One of the longest sections deals with the state's fight for women's suffrage, crucial because it was Tennessee's vote that ratified the 19th Amendment in 1920.

Eighteen black-and-white photographs enhance the book's text and extend it with small-print captions that are often paragraph length. By using the singular *woman* in the title, Dykeman emphasizes the importance of each individual life she describes in the book and underscores the fact that none of her subjects are more important or more distinctly "Tennessean" than any other.

Tennessee Woman is significant because it calls attention to often forgotten or neglected Tennessee women and their experiences, women who have collectively shaped our past and continue to influence our present and future.

— Ellen M. Millsaps

Ellen M. Millsaps is professor of English at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn. She teaches courses in women writers, British literature, drama, and composition.

From Mountain to Metropolis: Appalachian Migrants in American Cities
edited by Kathryn M. Borman and Phillip J. Obermiller

Bergin & Garvey
Westport, Conn. - 1994
$55.00 (hardcover)

Phillip J. Obermiller and Kathryn M. Borman, editors of this multiauthor collection of 14 essays called *From Mountain to Metropolis: Appalachian Migrants in American Cities,* intend this volume to be "a case study of internal migration in developed countries."

There are millions of second or third generation Appalachians, both black and white, who live in cities throughout the land and who no longer think of them-

selves as Appalachians. On the other hand, many migrants and their children have maintained their cultural ties to the region and its values. They are viewed as "hillbillies" by their non-Appalachian neighbors who often treat them in ways that are destructive to their self-esteem and future success.

Attempting to show the different stages of the process of settling into the urban scene, the authors in this volume look "beyond the earlier stages of migration to its social consequences." Most Appalachians, they say, have settled into the urban scene successfully in terms of jobs and housing, but once that has been accomplished, Obermiller and Borman note, new problems arise in "acquiring education, gaining access to health care systems, and preserving cultural values."

The contributors to *From Mountain to Metropolis* include several well-known figures in Appalachian Studies, including Michael Maloney, Rhoda Halperin, Virginia McCoy, Clyde McCoy, and Robert Oldendick. Others are newer scholars, teachers, and activists, mostly from the Cincinnati area.

Despite the title, most of the essays are based on studies of Appalachian communities in Cincinnati, Ohio. However, the studies' lessons and insights can easily be applied to other settings. The chapters deal with a variety of issues: current and future prospects for migrants; the migrants' sense of cultural identity; special problems of Appalachian women, children, and youth; health, educational, and environmental concerns; intervention by educators and social workers; and research and program development needs.

Obermiller, currently a research associate at the University of Kentucky's Appalachian Center, and Borman, a University of Cincinnati education professor, have written a good introduction about the problems faced by migrants. The subsequent chapters vary in effectiveness. One of the more interesting pieces is Obermiller and Ray Rappold's discussion of "post-death" migration; that is, they describe the practice of sending native Appalachians home to the mountains for burial. Others are excellent as well, notably the ones dealing with health issues.

However, the effectiveness of some — particularly those relating to social work and education — is undercut by the jargon, symbols, scholarly references, and models that get in the way of clarity. In the final chapter, Rhoda Halperin sums up the migrants' problems and needs in general and points the way toward additional needed research. She also outlines how researchers can be better advocates for migrants as well as how they can help them plan their own programs to meet their needs.

Throughout the book are much-needed data and suggestions for improving programs in various fields. In particular, the bibliography is an important one. This book should be in urban and Appalachian libraries, although its cost may limit it in personal libraries.

— Loyal Jones

Recently retired director of Berea College's Appalachian Center, Loyal Jones continues to write and speak about Appalachian topics.

A NOTE TO MARILYN

"Heather is eight now," you say.
"She won't take a bath without
a story."

Amanda, too, turned against baths
at eight, hers a silent rebellion.
She spent hours in the bathroom —
the filled tub steaming the air
pulling the paper from the walls
fogging the mirror so her reflection
looked back ghostlike.

She wadded her towel, rumpled the bath mat
let the unused bath water chortle down the drain
and emerged from her ablution
announcing, "I'm clean, Mama."

Never mind the streaks down her arms
where rivulets had run from her hand washing.
Never mind the mud on her knees nor
the black-beaded ring encircling her neck.

"I'm all through," she sang out
dirt so dear to her
she became her own story.

— Connie Jordan Green

Connie Jordan Green has had poetry published in Confrontation, Cotton Boll, Cumberland Poetry Review, Iowa Woman, Now & Then, Poem, *and others. She also writes books and short fiction. Green teaches writing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.*

Rambling Through the Music Scene

Tommy Thompson

just across the blue ridge where the high meadows lay
and the galax spreads through the new-mown hay
there's a rusty iron bridge cross a shady ravine
where the hard road ends and turns to clay
with a suitcase in his hand, a lonesome boy stands
gazing at the river sliding by beneath his feet
but the dark water springs from the black rocks and flows
out of sight where the twisted laurel grows.
past the coal-tipple towns in the cold December rain
into Charleston runs the New River train
where the hillsides are brown and the broad valley stained
by a hundred-thousand lives of work and pain
in a tar-paper shack out of town across the track
stands an old used-up man trying to call something back
but his old memories fade like the city in the haze
and his days have flowed together like the rain
and the dark water springs from the black rocks and flows
out of sight where the twisted laurel grows.

Lauren Deutsch

The Red Clay Ramblers: Jack Herrick, Tommy Thompson, Clay Buckner, Mike Craver, and Jim Watson.

Twisted Laurel

Tommy Thompson

Just a - cross the blue ridge where the
high mea-dows lay and the ga - lax spreads through the new-mown
hay there's a ru - sty iron bridge cross a
sha - dy ra - vine where the hard road ends and turns to
clay. With a suit-case in his hand, a – lone some boy stands
ga - zing at the ri - ver sli - ding by be-neath his feet. But the
dark wa - ter springs from the black rocks and flows out of
sight where the twi - sted lau - rel grows.

Coda

And the dark wa - ter springs from the
black rocks and flows out of sight where the twi-sted lau-rel grows.

Tommy Thompson, a native West Virginian, told me "Twisted Laurel" was written to capture the "before and after" aspects of growing up in West Virginia; namely, before and after the factories came to Charleston. He recalls visiting his grandparents in the mountains near Charleston and being captivated by what he saw: "I remember seeing Charleston in the night time all lit up from the factories. It was like seeing rubies and diamonds in the sky. I guess it was those godawful fumes that made the sky like that. No one knew then that those fumes would hurt them."

As a musician, Thompson is recognized far and wide for his exceptional clawhammer banjo playing. He is a founding member of the Red Clay Ramblers, a group known for its great old-time music performances as well as for bringing together other musical styles, from Memphis blues to Tin Pan Alley. The Ramblers have been hard to pigeonhole. They are always ready to venture into any musical genre, including theater and film scores. Theatrical projects have included the Off-Broadway productions of *Diamond Studs* and *Lie of the Mind.* Before retiring from the Red Clay Ramblers, Thompson performed on Broadway in *Fool Moon.* He collaborated on the film scores for *Far North* and *Silent Tongue,* both directed by Sam Shepard. Thompson also acted in *Silent Tongue.*

Thompson's latest project is collecting his favorite old-time songs for an upcoming CD release. Musician, songwriter, actor, playwright: Tommy Thompson has successfully run the gamut of musical experience.

— Ed Snodderly

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Maps

for Curtis O. Roberson (1906-1994)

In 1960, my grandmother's cousin Curtis Roberson was one of two men assigned by the Appalachian Power Company to find and move all graves in a four-county area near Roanoke, Va., that would subsequently be flooded by the Smith Mountain Dam Project. Over the next two-and-a-half years, Curtis and his partner Herbert Taylor, both APCo employees since the 1930s, supervised the relocation of 1,361 graves.

1.
Rely on old maps: they hold a place
just as our faces retain who we have been
and will shine with us now in who we will be,
so dearly does the flesh love us —

its palm lines are said to be a map
of our wanderings under the stars,
then into the root-starred earth.

2.
Ah, lo —
What was the little song you would sing at evening
free from the burden of work
when all paths led endlessly into the green ease of the world?

lo lo Lord —
Did you sing of the good Christians going to heaven?
Of the sweet one leaned forward on the porch
until all but your white shirt was gone in the dark?

Lord, Lord, Lord —
Or did you sing of the forgotten dead
pocketed in the green hills of Bedford County
of Franklin and Roanoke counties?

Some later resting above the flexing rim of Smith Mountain Lake
some dissolving with the soft lake bed
most the Company moved —
some having left as witness loose buttons,
teacups alongside a thigh, wedding bands,
some unmarked, attended by periwinkle

said to grow of its own accord over the dead.
But by then you were getting on,
a good Company man, instructed to watch
each moved to a two-by-two-by-one-foot box.

3.
My father is photographed above lit-up Roanoke Valley,
age fourteen. This face shows up later in my brother.
Curtis is photographed with his prize roses.
Smith Mountain Dam floods more light into Roanoke.
Maps are changed. And so on.
Proof of the grave is a stain left in the earth
from the corpse, the clothes it wore Sure, girl
all the grave holds is a little colored soil
he says, the peace of old men on him,
straightens his prize roses. Maps are changed.
Not even old maps hold the little songs sung at evening.

— Lisa Coffman

Lisa Coffman has been awarded a Pew Fellowship in the Arts and a Pennsylvania Council Grant for poetry. She has served as resident poet at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa. Coffman studied at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and at New York University. This poem is one of a series written in and around Glenmary, Tenn., the hometown of Coffman's mother, while the poet was working on the Pew Fellowship.

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WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS
Swans and ducks float on Schenk Lake under the watchful gaze of Willard the Snowman, named for NBC-TV weatherman Willard Scott who threw the switch to open Wheeling, West Virginia's, first Winter Festival of Lights at Oglebay Park in 1985.

NOW & THEN
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